

PETER NAVARRE

WAR OF 1812 SCOUT



The Man Behind the Legend



Larry Michaels
Robyn Hage

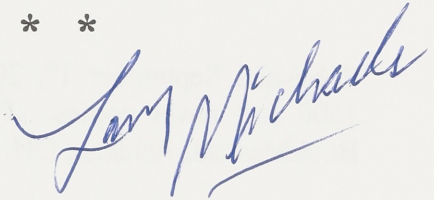


Peter Navarre:
War of 1812 Scout

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This book is dedicated to:

Marshall Lloyd

and all descendants of

the family of Navarre

“The stain shall not tarnish nor blemish shall mar
The glory which halos the name of Navarre.”

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Introduction:

First Citizen of the East Side

Scholars have long concluded that history is comprised of legends and part lies, with mere misunderstandings sprinkled with a few facts. Such is the case of Peter Navarre. A descendant of French kings, he is called the first citizen of the East Side, and is also perhaps the most famous person in Toledo's long history. Navarre and his brothers were the first permanent settlers in what would become East Toledo, arriving in 1807. His name still evokes recognition among local landmarks.

During the crucial years when our country was being formed, from about 1790 to 1815, Northwest Ohio was in the center of the battles that shaped the future westward settlement of our nation. The Indian wars of the early 1790s culminated in General Mad Anthony Wayne's victory at the Battle of Fallen Timbers on August 20th, 1794, which took place just west of modern day Maumee. Even more threatening though was the British invasion during the War of 1812. It is said that if the War of 1812 were studied as much as the Civil War, Northwest Ohio would be the Gettysburg of that war. Peter Navarre was a genuine war hero at a time when the whole Northwest Territory might have been lost to England, never to become part of the United States.

But even though the Navarre name is still known, many inconsistencies with false information have been written about Peter and his family. With each retelling of

Navarre's story, his exploits seem to rise to the level of mythical proportions.

As the legend of the famous scout grew, the true history of the man became more and more obscure. Now as we begin the 21st century, as well as a new millennium, it seems an appropriate time to try to set the record straight concerning the East Side's most famous pioneer settler.

The Man Behind the Legend

This book is an attempt to go behind the legend of Peter Navarre and search for the real man. It is an effort to place before the reader the most likely scenario of historical events based on all available information. But there are difficulties. Since Peter himself could not write, only verbal accounts recorded by other people have survived, and many of those are conflicting. Also, it is only natural for well-known figures to embellish the accomplishments of their youth when recalled during their old age, and Navarre was certainly guilty of this on occasion.

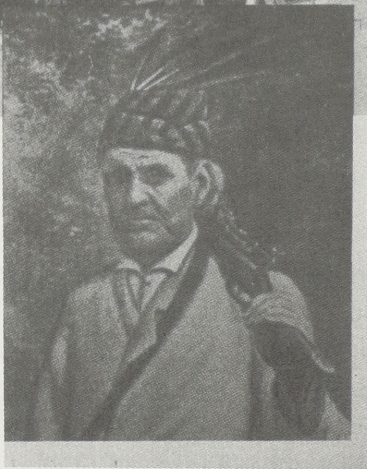
At this late date, it is impossible to reconstruct every detail of his life, but at least the evidence of existing records can be weighed and given full consideration. Also, it is important to bring together in one book as much information as possible about this prominent person, so that future generations will have a basis for studying any other materials that may come to light. Ultimately, it will be the responsibility of the reader to discern the significance of Peter Navarre's role in our American heritage.

A second purpose of this book is to instill a further sense of pride among members of the East Side community in the importance of our history. During Navarre's lifetime, events were happening in the Northwest Ohio area that shaped the future of our whole country. People always tend to take their own local history for granted and think that greatness occurred somewhere else. Yet the siege of Fort Meigs, the Raisin River Massacre, the defense of Fort Stephenson, the Battle of the Thames, and the Battle of Lake Erie were all important events in the War of 1812 that helped shape America's westward expansion.

The East Side's first settler not only witnessed and lived through these events, but also played at least a minor role in their outcome. So Peter Navarre's life deserves to be better known, especially among those living east of the river in the community where he first settled and fought to make a safer place for the pioneers who would follow in his footsteps.

* * *

The authors gratefully acknowledge all who have helped preserve the memory of Peter Navarre and his era. Special thanks go to Marshall Lloyd, a descendant of the Navarres, for his thorough research into every aspect of the family history and for making it all available on the internet. Thanks also to Jim Marshall and the staff of the Local History Department of the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, the staff of the Monroe County Historical Society, the staff of the Burton Collection at the Detroit Public Library, the teachers and staff at Navarre Elementary School, and all who have helped in any way to preserve the memory of this important pioneer family.



Chapter One:

The Legend

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“Fiction is Stranger than Truth”

* *

Honors for an Old Scout and Story-Teller

During Peter Navarre's own lifetime, not too much fuss was made over the old pioneer scout. He continued to live in the woods, trap his furs, farm his land, and hunt his dinners. Occasionally he was visited by someone curious about his role during the War of 1812, and he would tell again the old familiar tales. William Machen painted his portrait in 1867, and a few historians talked with Navarre in his old age. He attended reunions of War of 1812 veterans in Toledo and Monroe, Michigan. Late in his life he became president of the Maumee Valley Pioneer Association (a forerunner of the Maumee Valley Historical Society), and eventually in 1864, after many

unsuccessful attempts, he finally was awarded a small pension of \$8 per month that helped relieve his financial dependence on his family. He lived in his cabin in the woods until shortly before his final illness and death in early 1874.



THE BEAUTIFUL NAVARRE PARK PAVILLION.

Early view of Navarre Park with 1895 Shelter House.

The legend grew slowly at first. It was nearly twenty years after his death before a newly-developed parkland was given his name, and it would be another twenty years before a monument dedicated to him and his brother was erected in the park. An old cabin of uncertain origin, probably built in the 1860s for Peter by his son Peter, Jr., was brought to Navarre Park about a decade later and soon became confused with a much earlier cabin. Also, late in the 19th century, an elementary school was

named for him, but perhaps only because it happened to stand on “Navarre” Avenue. Yet, over the years, the legend was growing.

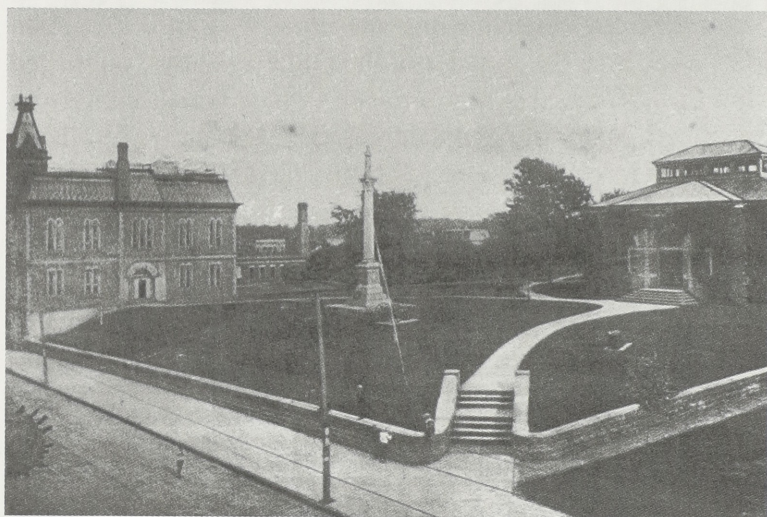
The Legend in the Early 20th Century

It was during the first quarter of the 20th century that the Navarre legend experienced its greatest growth, and also perpetuated many inaccuracies. In 1902, John Gunckel, later the founder of the Old Newsboys, published his *Early History of the Maumee Valley*, which included a personal memoir he solicited from Navarre over thirty years before. This account, in Navarre’s own words, seemed to revive interest in the stirring events those earlier times. Suddenly the community that had neglected the old pioneer during his lifetime began now to over-praise him.

For example, an article by George Pearson appeared in the *Toledo Blade* in 1905, subtitled “Something of His Deeds of Daring and Heroism,” emphasizing Navarre’s “perilous journey” to Fort Stephenson through a “fearful thunder-storm” to deliver the warning of a British attack to Major Croghan. The intrepid scout “was forced to wade through water in a blinding storm for miles” with the important message “sewed between the collar of his woolen shirt.”

While controversy surrounds this story, in all probability Pearson, who was an outstanding reporter, took the incident from Clark Waggoner’s thorough *History of Toledo and Lucas County* published in 1888. Waggoner writes that Navarre “use to say that the worst night he ever spent was as a bearer of a dispatch from General Harrison, then at Fort Meigs, to Fort Stephenson (now Fremont). Amid a thunderstorm of great fury and fall of water, he

made the trip of over 30 miles through the unbroken wilderness, and the morning following delivered to General Harrison a reply." How Waggoner got his account from Navarre is not known, but it is a good example of story being repeated over and over until it becomes part of the legend.



Early View of Site of Fort Stephenson, Fremont.

Pearson also gives valuable details about Peter's life and descendents, and mentions that "his grave at St. Mary's cemetery has been neglected, and no one knows the spot where his ashes remain." This alone is confusing, because no other account of his burial implies cremation. Pearson is the first to report that the Ford Post (East Side veterans of the Civil War) "has in mind the erection of a

monument at Navarre Park, the scene of many of his visits to the Indians." Funds were already being raised, but it would take nine years before the monument was dedicated on July 4th, 1914. The fanfare accompanying this celebration was extensive and is further described in Chapter Seven of this book. Through these years, though, the legend continued to grow.

Also about this time, Michael P. Murphy wrote a long poem in honor of the scout entitled simply "Peter Navarre." It was read by Mrs. W. F. Barrett at the dedication of the monument in Navarre Park in 1914 (*Toledo Times* article, July 5, 1914). The entire text of the poem is recorded in Josephine Fassett's *History of Oregon and Jerusalem* (pp. 225-226, and Fassett adds that it was also read at the dedication of the cabin moved to Navarre Park in 1922). In overblown verse Murphy lauds Navarre's achievements at great length, for example:

"The men in the forts ply the pick and the spade;
The women and children within the stockade,
Like the mariners who trust in their compass and star,
Place their hopes in high Heaven and --- Peter Navarre."

The poem was reprinted and did much to popularize and promote the legend of Navarre. See Appendix One for the entire text of the poem.

That same day at Navarre Park, General Isaac Sherwood gave a well-received address, in which he equated Peter Navarre with Paul Revere and General Philip Sheridan. Just as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow of course made "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" famous and Thomas Buchanan Read immortalized Sheridan's dramatic ride from Winchester during the Civil War, Navarre's scouting missions were recalled in a poem by

Kate Brownlee Sherwood read before the Maumee Valley Pioneers on February 22, 1880. General Sherwood quotes from that poem as follows:

“Blow soft above their lowly graves,
O north wind, swift and keen,
And south wind, that the lily wooes,
Keep all their grasses green.
O spirit of the centuries,
Blow in his heart who hears,
And wake to fragrant memories
The Maumee pioneers.
Our feet are on historic ground,
The very streets we tread
Re-echo to the solemn sound,
Above the shroudless dead.
Here sleep the braves of Pontiac,
There Harmer’s hosts go down;
Here bold Mad Anthony calls back
The knights of old renown,
Today above these nameless graves
Across a hundred years,
We name our Peter of Navarre,
Foremost of Maumee pioneers.”

Certainly a better poet than Murphy, Kate Sherwood was a well-known writer of her era. And the fact that Navarre was being celebrated in verse shows the extent at that time of his popular fame.

Navarre in the 1920s

By the 1920s, even greater attention was being paid to the old scout. In 1920, the outgrown 19th century school was replaced by a larger, new Navarre School on

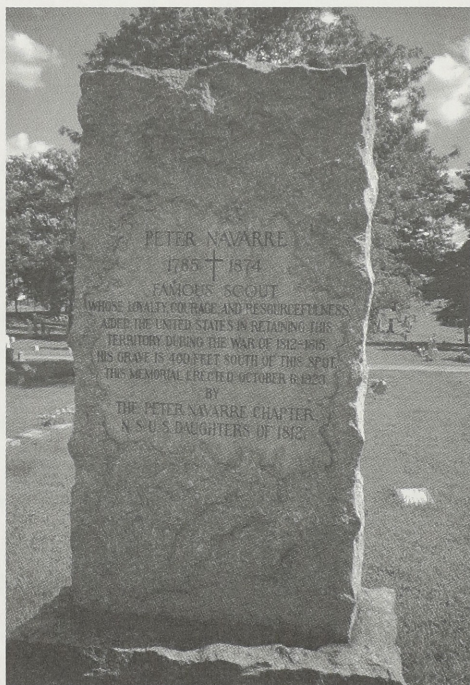
Navarre Avenue at Kingston, the first of many elementary schools built in East Toledo during that decade.

Then, in 1922, the old log cabin of the Navarres out Corduroy Road on the Enos Mominee farm was taken down and reassembled in Navarre Park. A ceremony was held there on September 9th, the day in 1813 that Navarre was said to have brought the important message from Harrison to Perry to engage the British fleet on Lake Erie. It was at this time that September 9th was declared Peter Navarre Day, an official holiday in the city of Toledo. In spite of its dubious origins, the cabin would be visited by many school children over the years, and it became a visible reminder of the exploits of Peter Navarre.



Early View of Cabin in Navarre Park, 1926.

Other reminders of Navarre began to appear more frequently. In 1923, just one year after the moving of the cabin and the proclamation of the Navarre Day holiday, a monument was placed in Mount Carmel Cemetery to commemorate his long-neglected gravesite. The cemetery donated the land for the granite memorial, and the Peter Navarre Chapter of the Daughters of 1812 sponsored the event. Mrs. Charles Stephens, who was chairwoman of the committee, along with Toledo Mayor Bernard Brough turned the first spades of dirt for the future location of the shaft on August 28, 1923.



Navarre Marker at Mount Carmel Cemetery.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Stephens did not live to see the end results of her labors. The dedication ceremony did not take place until October 8, 1923, at which time Mayor Brough declared "it is fitting that we make such an occasion, one for teaching the lessons of true Americanism. We are paying the homage due to Peter Navarre." David and Lawrence Navarre, great-grand nephews, were present on the podium, as well as Oliver Navarre, 83, who was a son of Peter. The participants sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" and "America."

George Scheets, secretary of the Ford Post and a friend of Peter Navarre, reminisced about the scout, while Reverend Patrick O'Brien of Good Shepherd Parish read the inscription on the monument to all who were present (*Toledo Blade*, October 8, 1923). The inscription reads in part: "Peter Navarre, 1785-1874. Famous Scout, Whose Loyalty, Courage and Resourcefulness Aided the United States in Retaining This Territory During the War of 1812-1815." Several newspaper articles were devoted to the dedication ceremonies for this large marker, which oddly enough was located four hundred feet from the burial site.

Even in death as in life, mystery shrouded the historical accuracy of Navarre's record. His official obituary in the *Toledo Commercial* (March 21, 1874) erred by stating that the funeral procession terminated their march at the Catholic cemetery on Collingwood Avenue. There was a Collingwood Cemetery, but St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery (now called Mount Carmel) was located at Manhattan and Lagrange. Both the *Toledo Blade* and the *Sandusky Daily Register* fail to mention the burial location in their obituaries, but all indications suggest that it was in fact St. Mary's where Navarre was finally laid to rest. Perhaps it was merely a misinformed typesetter in 1874 who confused the two cemeteries, thus

becoming one of many providers of erroneous information about Peter Navarre, including the old scout himself.

There is another strange twist in the legend of Peter Navarre concerning his grave. For many years no one knew the exact location of the actual grave within the boundaries of St. Mary's Cemetery. One would think that a man with such a recognized and illustrious life would receive at the very minimum a headstone. Perhaps decay or vandalism erased an earlier marker, but it is most likely that no grave marker was ever erected in the first place. Not until the Peter Navarre Chapter of the Daughters of 1812 was able to specifically identify the site in the 1920s through research of old records was a headstone issued for Navarre. On this stone, the name of his company leader, Menard, is misspelled as Monard, and the date and accuracy of the tombstone's placement is still in some doubt.

Further evidence of Navarre's legend appeared in 1927 when the *News Bee* ran a series of cartoons depicting important events in the history of Toledo. Number three in

STORY OF TOLEDO—No. 3



PETER NAVARRE is perhaps the most picturesque figure in Toledo history. Said to be the grandson of Robert Navarre, a French army officer, he was one of the first white settlers in the Maumee Valley. He spoke all the Indian dialects, besides English and French.



PETER NAVARRE and his brother Robert were included in the surrender of Fort Hull at Detroit, but were not treated as prisoners of war. Peter carried the message from Gen. William Henry Harrison, at Maumee, to Commodore Perry, which precipitated the historic battle of Lake Erie.



NAVARRE and his brother had built, in 1807, a log cabin on the West side, below Ironville. A reward for his capture was placed upon the head of Peter by the British, but they never succeeded in placing hands upon him.



TWO YEARS after the war, in 1809, a special act was passed to honor his services. On May 1, 1812, the United States removed the British name from the cabin and dedicated it to the memory of Peter Navarre.

From the Toledo News Bee, 1927.

the “Story of Toledo” series was a set of drawings showing episodes in the life of Peter Navarre. The drawings are obviously done from the 1867 painting by William Machen. The text also states that the 1807 cabin was the one brought to Navarre Park in 1922, just another of the factual errors added to the Navarre legend as it continued to expand in the public imagination.

Navarre’s Memoir

On February 8, 1931, the Toledo Sunday *Times* ran a long story by Wilfrid Hibbert with the bold headline “Navarre Killed Tecumseh.” The story is based on the personal account Navarre dictated to John Gunckel in 1866 and signed with his mark (a large “X”). This account had been discovered a few days before by Will H. Gunckel in an old trunk that belonged to his father, who had published it in his *Early History of the Maumee Valley* in 1902. Hibbert calls the document “dictated by the famous old scout and woodsman” an “authentic story of his exciting exploits in and about Toledo in those days when there were only puny settlements of French who had come down from Detroit.” The greater part of the article then proceeds to quote at length from Navarre’s own words.

Navarre’s account adds to the knowledge about him in many ways, but it also raises many questions and has been the source of much confusion. Since the Gunckel document is so important in understanding the legend of Peter Navarre, these personal recollections of the old scout are given here in their entirety as follows:

“I was born on the 22nd day of January, 1787 [mistyped as 1887 in the article], in the city of Detroit. It was there that my grand-father, Robert Navarre, settled,

coming from France. My father was also born in Detroit; my mother, whose maiden name was Marie Louise Panat Campeau, was born in Vincennes, Indiana.

I came to the Maumee river with my father, mother and the whole family, comprising six boys, Francois, Robert, Jacob or James, Peter, Antoine, Alexis, and three girls, Marie Louise, Geneveva, and Archange. There was nothing remarkable in the event of our family until the time that General Hull betrayed his army in so cowardly a manner at Detroit. My brothers and I had gone to Monroe to take up arms against the English, but after Hull's surrender we were all paroled by some English officers coming from Detroit for that purpose. This was, if I recollect right, in August, 1812. We stayed in Monroe until the next year, when my narrative properly commences.

On the 18th day of January, 1813, my brothers, Robert and James, and I took part in an engagement fought on the Raisin river. We were commanded by Colonel Lewis, who defeated the enemy. In this engagement we brothers took an Indian prisoner. On the 22nd day of January the English attacked our forces on the same place and defeated us, being vastly our superior in numbers. They took General Winchester, Colonel Lewis and the whole army prisoners. Two or three hundred that tried to save themselves in the woods were surrounded and unmercifully butchered by the Indians.

When we saw that General Winchester and Colonel Lewis were surrendering, I escaped in the company of my brothers, James and Robert, being dressed as Indians. This, however, the Indians soon discovered, and they sent a volley after us and also many followed us, but we were too far in advance, and not relishing the idea

of being scalped and tomahawked, and being, moreover, good runners, we succeeded in making our escape unhurt.

We arrived at the lake shore near the mouth of the Raisin river and crossed on the ice in the direction of Cedar Point [his home near the east shore of the Maumee River], whence, after having rested a few moments, we made for Presqu'île, where our parents lived, by a circuitous route through the woods. Next day we set out to bring tidings to General Harrison of the defeat of General Winchester and the catastrophe of the massacre. We met him at Portage river, near the foot of the rapids, and came back with him and his force to the place where Fort Meigs since stood, and which fort was then immediately begun. It was there that we entered the army as volunteers and there I received my gun by order of General Harrison.

The first engagement during which I used this gun was between the American General Dudley and the English General Proctor. In this battle Dudley was defeated and made prisoner. When the Indians, at the instigation of Proctor, were about to kill him, Tecumseh, the great Indian chief, prevented the massacre of this General and two hundred and fifty or three hundred Americans who had been taken prisoners with him. The remainder of the force, five to six hundred, had been killed in battle. Only two escaped and they were Lesley Comb and I. My brothers did not take part in this battle. We took refuge in Fort Meigs.

The cause of the defeat was this: General Dudley had received orders from General Harrison to take or spike the English cannon on the other side of the river, opposite the fort, and to retreat immediately into the fort, but he disobeyed orders, and trying to attack the Indians in

the woods, he fell into an ambush and met with a most disastrous defeat.

In the month of June of the same year [1813], the English attacked Fort Stephenson at Sandusky. General Harrison was then at Seneca Town, now Fremont. Colonel Croghan, a young man, commanded the fort and defeated the English, who left four hundred dead, and retreated to Fort Malden, whence they came. When General Harrison left Fort Meigs he placed General Grinckley in command of said fort. I accompanied General Harrison in all of his subsequent movements.

I carried this gun when bringing dispatches to Commodore Perry, relative to the naval engagement on Lake Erie, which soon followed. This was during the first days of September. After Perry's victory we marched to Detroit and arrived there on the 29th day of September in the same year.

I took part in the battle of the Thames, which was fought in the month of October. This battle, which lasted only three or four hours, was fierce in the extreme. Here, as is well known, Tecumseh was killed. Colonel Johnson, under whose command I fought, was wounded and had his horse killed under him. While he was down, Tecumseh sprang from behind a tree to tomahawk and scalp him. I saw an Indian pouncing upon my Colonel and fired with this gun upon him. He fell and the war cry of Tecumseh was heard no more.

As soon as the Indians knew that Tecumseh was killed, they fled precipitately and were gone in an instant. On the next morning early, General Harrison commanded Medard Labadie [Nedard LeCadie in Gunckel, an example perhaps of the difficulty understanding Navarre's accent]

and me to help him look for the remains of Tecumseh. He expressed the opinion that Tecumseh must be killed as the Indians had fled so suddenly. We repaired to the place where Colonel Johnson had been wounded, and found the Indian that had been killed by me.



Tecumseh, chief of the Shawnee

Drawing of Chief Tecumseh.

The Indian, dead, had been mutilated and disfigured, especially in the face, by our soldiers after the battle, and it would have been almost impossible to recognize Tecumseh had it not been for his powerful frame and imposing stature. The convincing proof of the identity of the man, however, was a large scar caused by a very

severe burn on his right thigh. General Harrison, who knew Tecumseh intimately, thought of this, and having examined the corpse, we at once saw that it was he. General Harrison ordered us to give the remains of Tecumseh a decent burial, and having fulfilled his orders, he told us, "You have buried a brave man."

After the battle of the Thames, we returned to Detroit and I was there relieved from service and returned to Presqu'île on the Maumee river. After having obtained by honorable discharge, I offered to leave my gun, but General Harrison bade me keep it, saying: "Navarre, the gun which you used during the service is yours." I took it along and have used it until a few years ago, when my eyesight becoming too weak, I could not make use of it any longer.

With this identical gun I have killed panthers, bears, wolves, wild cats, and innumerable quantity of deer, coons, foxes, wild turkeys, geese, swans and ducks, prairie chickens and quails, and all other kinds of small game. Although I had never occasion to use this gun to defend myself against Indians, after the war alluded to above, it has, however, often saved my life, for without it I should have starved. It was originally supplied with a flint lock, but as it wanted repairs, I took it to Detroit in the year 1837 and there it was changed into a percussion lock.

This gun has been in my possession during an uninterrupted period of fifty-six years, and was new when I received it at Fort Meigs. The powder horn and ammunition bag with this gun are not those I made use of in the war spoken of above. Having been worn through by reason of the friction against each other, and having thus become completely useless, they were substituted by new ones, but the leather strap attached thereto is the original

strap which I wore attached to my powder horn and ammunition bag from the time I received my gun.

Being desirous that this gun and accompanying articles be preserved as relics of the war of 1812, I have presented them this day to Henry Hall, Esq., of Toledo, who also owns my full length portrait, painted from life, with great truth to nature, by Wm. H. Machen, of the same place, in the year 1867, hoping thereby to contribute something towards the further elucidation of the early and interesting history of this country and thus to render in my old age this my last service to my countrymen.

The powder horn, pouch and strap mentioned above I give to my friend, F. S. Nichols, whose acquaintance I made in the month of January, 1836, and we have been best friends ever since. The strap is the identical strap I used in the war of 1812, and which was given to me by General Harrison. I wish you to keep it in remembrance of your old and true friend, Peter Navarre."

This reprinting of Navarre's personal memoir, following the burst of interest in his story during the 1910s and 1920s, gave his legend an added impetus that would continue to foster its growth and perpetuate its errors for the next twenty years.

The Legend by the 1950s and After

By the early 1950s, Navarre's legend reached a height of exaggeration typified in an article by Dorothy Stafford in the *Toledo Blade* on March 30, 1952. The article begins: "A stalwart youth of 22 sat astride the roof of a log cabin, carefully fitting crude shingles into place. Ever [sic] so often he would prick up his ears and gaze

steadily into the underbrush all about him. Finally he yelled in an Indian dialect, 'Come on out brothers and get acquainted with your new neighbors.'" What follows is a far-fetched dialogue in conversational modern English about animal furs with the young brave who of course turns out to be Chief Little Turtle.

In the article, Stafford relates other highlights of the Navarre legend in similar fashion with little regard for facts, as in her confusion of Menomineetown [sic] with Ironville. In another example, Stafford writes: "Peter's specialty was scouting. No night was too stormy, no river too swollen for him to go out and obtain information for his commander. He soon became known as the most dependable scout in the Maumee Valley, and any commander, with a difficult commission to carry out, said, 'Get Peter Navarre. He'll get there.'" She continues, "He warned them many times, and said one old Frenchman proudly, 'No Indian will ever catch our Peter. He is too fast for them.'" Thus the legend had attained a life of its own, only loosely based on the historical record, as in the stories told of Davy Crockett or Daniel Boone.

The last fifty years, however, have seen a more sober assessment of the Navarre legend. Even by 1956, just four years after the Stafford article, Ralph Phelps wrote a much more subdued and factual article under the headline "Peter Navarre, Early Settler of East Toledo, Played a Key Role As Scout In War of 1812" (*Toledo Blade*, April 11, 1956). Phelps chronicles all the most accepted events of Navarre's life, but does not include the stormy journey to Fort Stephenson nor does he have Navarre killing Tecumseh. The article ends: "His second and last cabin today stands in the northern part of Navarre Park. For lack of care, it is becoming a monument, not to a great scout, but to neglect, vandalism, vagrancy and

decay.” Phelps is not only more accurate in his reporting, but also certainly more prosaic in presenting Navarre’s legacy.

This more sensible approach has prevailed for the most part, and the articles that have appeared in the newspapers since the 1950s have been concerned mostly with the Navarre cabin, Navarre Park, and the celebration of Peter Navarre Day. Yet misinformation about Navarre has continued to be reported, and little has been done to correct earlier mistakes.

One 1956 article in the *Detroit News* by Don Hoenshell quotes “Peter’s triple grandnephew,” Joseph A. Navarre, then the state insurance commissioner of Michigan (*Detroit News*, November 29, 1956). This descendant stresses the Navarre cabin’s connection with Michigan, blithely assuming it is the cabin built before the Ohio-Michigan War of 1835. The article also states, “As a scout during the War of 1812, Peter participated in the Battle of Fallen Timbers and in other skirmishes along the Maumee River.” Not a part of the War of 1812, the Battle of Fallen Timbers was fought in August 1794 when Peter was, depending on his actual date of birth, between the age of four to nine years old.

Various aspects about the legend of Peter Navarre are still uncritically passed along at the present time. In a draft of a first chapter for a book called *The Ghosts of Michigan and Trumbull*, Donald Voelker refers to Navarre not only as the “noble scout,” but also as the “Father of Toledo” (Voelker, 1988, n.p.). A recent brochure at the Navarre-Anderson Trading Post in Monroe, Michigan, refers to “Peter Navarre, famous army scout and traditional founder of Toledo, Ohio.” How the old scout and story-

teller would have smiled to hear such acclaim attributed to him well over a century after his death.

Why So Many Conflicting Accounts?

Except for the date of Navarre's death, few other events of his life are agreed upon by the many historians and reporters who have written about him over the years. There are conflicting accounts about almost every aspect and accomplishment in his life and legend. For example, his date of birth is recorded in various accounts as 1785 (the most common), 1786 (rarely), 1787, 1788, 1790, or "about 1790." Why so much confusion and published misinformation?

Patrick M. Tucker, in his thesis entitled *Peter Navarre in Fact and Fiction: An Example of Historic Memory Loss*, thoroughly discusses how errors enter the historical record through the loss of memorial knowledge, "that is knowledge based on recollection of eye witness accounts before being made part of the written record," which often "shifts with the passage of time because human memory is subjective" (Tucker, p. 2). Dealing with the family settling at Presque Isle, the Navarre cabin, and Navarre's claim of killing Tecumseh, Tucker shows how fact and fiction can become intertwined. He writes that Navarre's legend "is an excellent example" of a "lack of distinction between primary and secondary memories [or] remembering the individual from remembering memories of him" (Tucker, p. 30). In other words, writers often have made no distinction between what happened and what someone said happened. This is certainly true in almost every aspect of Navarre's life.

Many other factors make separating fact from fiction in Navarre's case especially difficult. The first problem is Peter Navarre himself. Why did he claim, for example, to have killed Tecumseh? Was it the natural tendency for an old man to exaggerate his earlier exploits, some actual loss of memory in old age, the love of simply telling a good story, a desire for a place in history, or a combination of all of the above?

Also, it must be remembered, Navarre was illiterate and could not even sign his name, so all interviewers had to rely on oral accounts from the old scout. Although a skilled linguist, Navarre's primary language was French, so that his English was heavily accented and no doubt difficult for others to understand, as evidenced by so many bizarre and conflicting spellings of proper names and places.

In addition, a great deal of time elapsed between Navarre's participation in the War of 1812 and the actual recording of his adventures. Only vague references to "the frenchmen" appear in official records, and since Navarre and his brothers were not officially enlisted in the army, their activities were mainly credited only by word of mouth.

Tucker writes, "Through the years our memory and knowledge of Peter Navarre as a noted historical figure has been elevated to that of a legend, or even super-hero, in the history of the 'Old Northwest' Territory" (Tucker, p. 1). But for whatever reason, the discrepancies and wildly varying accounts of Navarre's life and legend make the search for the historical man all the more interesting. What was his life really like? What sort of man was this old warrior? What actual scouting missions did he really perform? Did he warn Fort Stephenson, kill

Tecumseh, or carry the famous message from Perry to Harrison?

The chapters that follow will explore the life of Peter Navarre, attempting as much as possible to find the real man behind the legend.



Navarre Coat of Arms.

Chapter Two:

The Early Life

* - *

“Descendant of Kings”

* *

The Lineage of Peter Navarre

Peter Navarre really was in all probability a descendant of kings. It is faintly ironic that accounts of Navarre make so little of this blue-blooded ancestry before his grandfather arrived in America. Perhaps having royal blood was seen as diminishing his hardy reputation as an exceptional woodsman and rugged pioneer.

Accounts of Navarre usually begin with his grandfather, Robert de Navarre (1709-1791), who was the first Navarre to arrive in America in either 1739 or 1745. Most of the reliable sources cite 1745 as the date of his arrival at Fort Ponchartrain at Detroit (Hosmer, p. 4, Waggoner, p.

657, and Navarre's *Toledo Commercial* obituary). Willard, however, a good source for genealogy, gives the date as 1739, as does Sherman (see also *Monroe Evening News*, March 10, 1969). He was sent to America to represent the French government as Royal Notary and Sub-Delige, or Magistrate. When the British took possession in 1760, he became the principal Indian agent (Sherman, n.p.). Robert Navarre's original land grant is now Grosse Pointe. Willard comments that his "service was so important to the growth of Detroit that his statue was placed atop the Book Cadillac Hotel along with those of Gen. Anthony Wayne, Cadillac and Pontiac" (*Rochester Sentinel*, September 17, 1997).



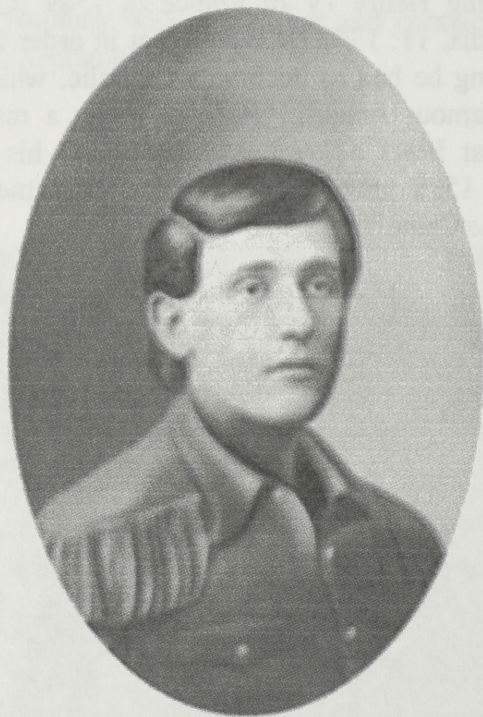
Robert Navarre on Book Cadillac Hotel, Right.

The lineage of Robert Navarre goes back to the early rulers of Navarre, a province in northern Spain nestled between the Alps and the Pyrenees. A Navarre heiress, Jeanne D'Albret, married Antoine de Bourbon, Duke of Vendome. Antoine (or Antony) was nine generations descended from Robert of Clermont, the sixth son of Louis IX, "Saint Louis," of the House of Valois. The marriage of Antoine de Bourbon and Jeanne D'Albret joined the ancient Navarres to the rulers of France and produced a son, Henry of Navarre (1553-1610), who became King Henry IV of France in 1589 (Compton's Encyclopedia, 11: 139). It is said that in order for him to become king he had to become a Catholic, which he did with the famous remark, "Paris is worth a mass." He remained at heart a loyal protestant, and his Edict of Nantes in 1598 gave the Huguenots the same political rights as the Catholics.



Henry IV of France, 1553-1610.

Henry's first wife, Marie of Valois, died childless, but not so his mistress, Gabrielle D'Estrees. Her son, Caesar, Duke of Vendome, produced the line that led to Robert Navarre, Peter's grandfather. Louis XIII was the son of Henry's second wife, Marie de Medici, and thus the family tree of the Bourbons continued to produce legitimate kings of France. But the Navarre line indeed could boast of royal blood, and also claim as a direct ancestor perhaps the greatest of all French kings.



**Artistic Interpretation of Robert de Navarre,
Peter's Grandfather, 1709-1791.**

Robert de Navarre was described as "a very handsome man with courtly manners, most engaging and

charming in conversation" (*Monroe Evening News*, March 10, 1969). In 1734, he married Mary Lootman Barrois and fathered a large family of sixteen children, including a Robert (who had two sons named Peter) and a Francis (the father of Peter the scout). The fact that the Navarres produced so many children spread among so few names has been partly to blame for the confusion surrounding Peter Navarre's lineage.



Fort Ponchartrain: Robert Navarre Arrived in 1739.

Confusion of the Three Peter Navarres

There were three Peter Navarres who were of the same generation, all cousins and grandsons of Robert de Navarre, and all living in the Detroit, Frenchtown, and Presque Isle vicinities at about the same time. Some of the false information perpetuated about the scout over years

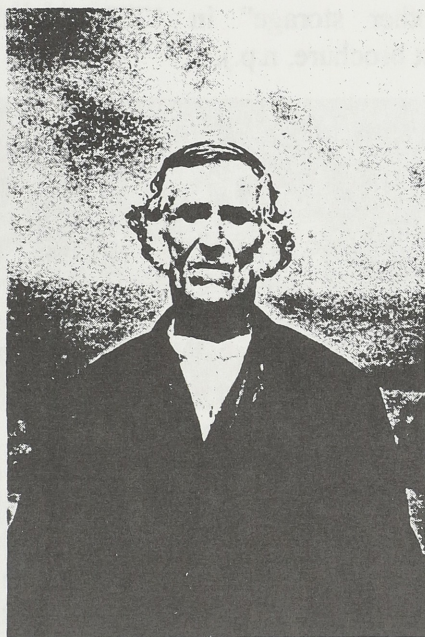
has resulted from confusing and blending the details of their lives.

The first Peter Navarre was born in Detroit on December 3, 1775, according to the records of old St. Anne's Parish. He was the seventh of fifteen children born to Robert Navarre (1739-1813), the son of Robert de Navarre, and his wife Mary Louisa Marsac (1744-1796) whose mother was a Campau (Denissen, *Genealogy*). This Peter Navarre was married on April 15, 1806, but died just two years later and is buried at St. Antoine's in Frenchtown, probably shortly after he arrived in the Raisin River area. Little else is known about this Peter Navarre or any surviving offspring.

The second Peter Navarre was a brother of the first Peter, the fourteenth of Robert and Mary Navarre's fifteen children, born in Detroit on February 8, 1787. Why he was named Peter when an older brother of the same name was still living remains a mystery. He is the one most often confused with the scout, even by Denissen who has him settling "ca. 1807 at the mouth of the Maumee River" and becoming "an efficient scout of Gen. Harrison" (Denissen, *Genealogy*).

This second Peter was usually called Pierre or "Plugette," and achieved a fame similar to that of the scout's by becoming the first settler of South Bend, Indiana. He is described as "six feet tall, slightly built, dark complexioned, possessed of a very intelligent countenance. He is represented as being well educated for the times in which he lived" (Willard, *Rochester Sentinel*, September 17, 1997). In 1820, he moved to northern Indiana and engaged in the fur trade for the American Fur Company, owned by John Jacob Astor.

Pierre, similar to his cousin Peter the scout, lived in the woods like an Indian and knew the Indian ways. In 1834 he married Angelique Kechoueckquay, daughter of a Potawatomi chief, even though they had been married in an Indian ceremony years before. They had ten children, and his cabin survives as a landmark in South Bend to this day. He died at the home of his daughter, Frances Degroff, back in Monroe, Michigan, in 1864.



Navarre in 1863

Pierre Navarre, Pioneer of South Bend, 1787-1864.

The third Peter Navarre, the scout and subject of this book, was the fifth child born to Francis M. Navarre, called by his Indian nickname “Utreau” (sometimes spelled Hutreau or Hutro or Utrau), who was born in Detroit in 1759. He married Mary Louisa Godet (for some reason referred to as Marie Louise Panat Campeau in

Peter's memoirs) on February 26, 1781, and together they had twelve children: Susanne, Francis Xavier, Robert, James, Peter, Mary Archange, Anthony (1793-1795), Anthony (b. 1796), Mary Louisa, Alexis, Geneveva, and Archange (Denissen, pp. 21-23). Utreau Navarre's nephew, Francis, later known as the Colonel (1763-1826), was the first of many French settlers at the Raisin River in 1783. Utreau's family followed him to that area soon known as Frenchtown and built "a seasonal structure for grain or other storage" in 1789 (Navarre-Anderson Trading Post brochure, n.p.).



Navarre-Anderson Trading Post, Built 1789.

After his father, Robert de Navarre, died in 1791, Utreau returned to Detroit to care for his mother and help

with the work on the farm. Six years later when his mother died, he sold the farm to Joseph Beaubien and rejoined him many relatives at the River Raisin (Voelker, n.p.). From 1797 until he sold it to Colonel John Anderson in 1802, Utreau's growing family, including Peter the scout, lived in the little wooden building he had built by the river in 1789. This early home of Peter Navarre is still standing and is known as the Navarre-Anderson Trading Post, the oldest surviving wooden structure in Michigan.

Birth Date of Peter Navarre

The difficulty in establishing the facts of Peter Navarre's life can be seen in the many different dates given for his birth. In his memoirs dictated to Gunkel, Navarre himself gives his birth date as January 22nd, 1787. This date also appears in Draper, except the year is recorded as 1788 (Draper, p. 135). In his recollections given to the *Toledo Blade* in 1872, Navarre "states that he was born in Detroit, Michigan, in 1786," perhaps already showing a tendency to exaggerate his age (*Toledo Blade*, June 11, 1872). The most common date given is 1785, which also appears in his obituary (*Toledo Commercial*, March 21, 1874).

Hosmer does not give an exact date of birth, but Waggoner records the 1785 date, and other local historians followed his lead. Most modern references also followed suit, and 1785 is the date inscribed on the plaque of Navarre's restored cabin. Other sources used Peter's memoir or Denissen's confusion of Peter with Pierre Plugette and continued to repeat the 1787 date (Sherman, n.p., Tucker, p. 3, Voelker, n.p., and the *Monroe Evening News*, March 10, 1969).

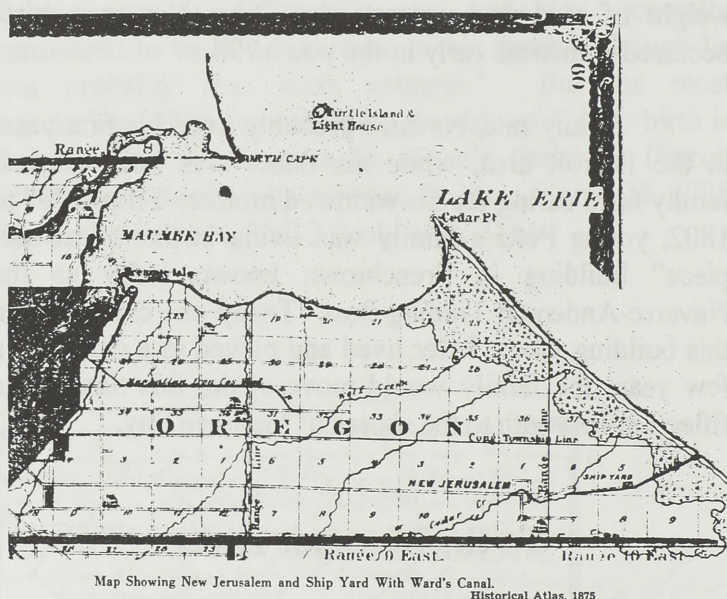
Frenchtown by 1789, was Peter perhaps born there and taken to Detroit for baptism? St. Antoine's Church in Frenchtown was organized in 1788, though, so it is also likely that the family was back in Detroit when Peter was born. Another intriguing possibility is that Peter gave his true birth date in his memoirs (supported by Draper), but increased his age by changing the year, which would make his actual date of birth January 22nd, 1790. There is no way to know for sure two centuries now removed, but the weight of evidence suggests that Peter Navarre's birth occurred sometime early in the year 1790.

At any rate, Navarre probably lived his first years in the Detroit area, while his father was back at their family farm caring for his widowed mother. From 1797 to 1802, young Peter's family was living in the "piece-sur-piece" building in Frenchtown known today as the Navarre-Anderson Trading Post. Today one can still visit this building where Peter lived and played as a child. In a few years the family would move again, this time about fifteen miles south to the shores of Maumee Bay.

To the Maumee River

About 1807 Peter and his family moved to the mouth of the Maumee River where a French settlement called Presque Isle grew up among the native Ottawa Indians who had lived in the area since the time of Pontiac in the 1760s. All the other local historians repeat Hosmer's 1807 date for the arrival of the Navarres. However, the memoir recorded by Gunckel in 1866 gives no exact date, and Navarre's 1872 account in the *Toledo Blade* mentions the fall of 1806 ("Recollections of a Pioneer," June 11, 1872).

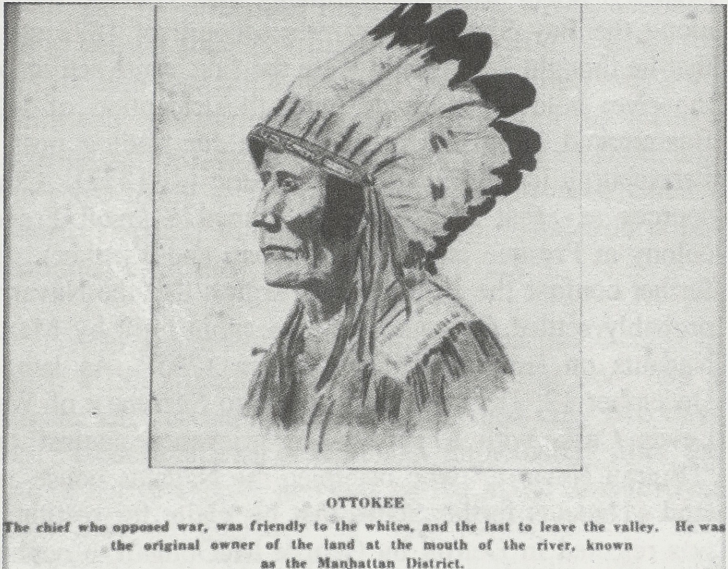
When the Navarres did arrive at Presque Isle, the Ottawa village located there was “a grassy plat—the houses, of logs, about sixty in number, were built in two rows, white-washed, and presented a cheerful and pleasant appearance” (Hosmer, p. 4). Hosmer adds, “There were eight thousand of the Ottawas at this time living upon the lower Maumee. They lived principally by hunting and



Presque Isle and Cedar Point along Maumee Bay.

fishing” (Sherman and Voelker give the number of Ottawa in 1816 as 1500). Peter, in 1872, recalls there were altogether 11,000 Indians living “between the Bay and Turkey Rock” (*Toledo Blade*, June 11, 1872). The Navarres, as well as the other French settlers, seem to have gotten along well with the Native Americans. Peter’s obituary states, “He and his brothers early became noted

for their courage and skill in woodcraft, so much so that the Indians of the country, while being on the most friendly terms with the young Frenchmen, also had a most wholesome respect for their prowess" (*Toledo Commercial*, March 21, 1874).



Chief Autokee of the Ottawa Indians.

It has been generally thought that Peter Navarre came to Northwest Ohio with his brother Robert, or with a couple of his other brothers as well, to become the first white settlers east of the river. Waggoner writes, "In 1807, with his brother Robert he erected a cabin near the mouth of the Maumee (East side), which continued to be his residence while he lived" (Waggoner, p. 657). Some sources mention that Peter arrived with his wife and brothers (Sherman, n.p., Voelker, n.p., and the 1920s

account at the Monroe County Historical Society). Actually, the whole family seems to have come to the Maumee at the same time, as stated in Navarre's own reminiscences of 1866 and 1872 (see also Hosmer, p. 4, *Toledo Commercial*, March 21, 1874).

Also, very possibly, there was already a colony of French settlers established among the Ottawa Indians along the Bay Shore. Navarre's account of 1872 states that he thought "the family were the first white settlers on the river below the rapids, with the exception of John Beauxgrand, who had established a fur trading post at Perrysburgh [sic]" (*Toledo Blade*, June 11, 1872). Other sources say that the Navarres "joined a small French colony at Presque Isle" (see Sherman and Voelker). To further confuse the issue, Tucker argues that the Navarres probably settled (or squatted) in a cabin built by Martin Nadauts on land granted to him in 1795. As late as December 12, 1833, Nadauts wrote to Secretary of War, Lewis Cass, with a petition of grievance against one "D'utrau Navarre," who occupied the Nadauts house and land. Nadauts further states that his claim for restitution was rejected in Detroit by George McDougall, a nephew of the Navarres, who was also an assistant or clerk in the commissioner's office (Tucker, pp. 4-5).

In all probability, Navarre did come to Presque Isle in 1806 or 1807 with his whole family, including his parents, and built his first cabin along Otter Creek at that time. If a French colony already existed in the area, it was no doubt very small and vanished with the beginning of the War of 1812. So it can be legitimately claimed that Peter and his brothers were the first permanent white settlers east of the Maumee River.

Wives of Peter Navarre

In spite of sources like Sherman and Voelker, it seems unlikely that Peter arrived at Presque Isle with a wife. Both sources are unreliable in such details, Peter would have been only sixteen or seventeen at the time, and he himself does not mention a wife in his own memoirs. It can be said, however, that Peter had three wives, although little is known about his first wife. No date is given for that first marriage, but a daughter named Felicity was born to him and Catherine Suzor on March 31, 1815. There seems to be no other record of either mother or child, and both most likely died soon afterwards (Monroe County Historical Society untitled article, p. 2). This wife is not mentioned in Denissen (*Navarre*, see p. 22).

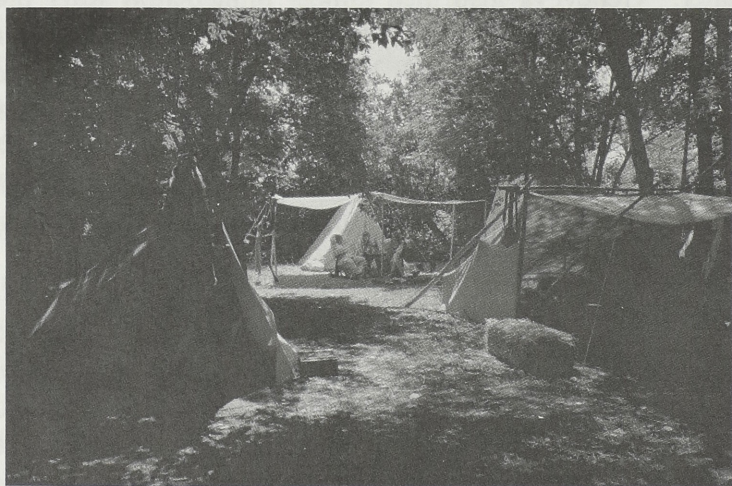
On September 13, 1825, Peter married Geneveva Robert at St. Antoine's in Frenchtown. She bore him a daughter on February 19, 1827, who died only two days later. Geneveva also died almost immediately after the birth of her first child, and was buried in the Raisin River burial plot on February 25th (see Cave, p. 251, and Bridgewater, pp. 395-396). It is interesting that Peter makes no mention of these tragedies in his memoirs. Death in childbirth was common, but certainly he must have grieved for such losses suffered when he was by then in his late 30s.

On October 8, 1828, Peter married Catherine Bourdeau, who was from a well-known family of Monroe, Michigan, as the Frenchtown settlement was now named (see Marshall Lloyd website). According to Denissen, she may have been a step-sister of Geneveva Robert, Peter's second wife. Geneveva was born February 19, 1799, to Isidore Robert and Agatha Reaume, and Catherine Bourdeau was born February 7, 1804, to Joseph Bourdeau

and Agatha Reaume (see *Navarre*, p. 22). Joseph Bourdeau is also mentioned as a scout and participant in the War of 1812 engagements around the River Raisin. Catherine Bourdeau bore Peter six sons and two daughters. See Chapter Six for more information about the lives of these children and other Navarre descendants.

Woodsman and Fur Trader

Waggoner states that before the War of 1812 closed the fur trade, Peter was employed for several years "by a Detroit house in buying furs of the Miamis near Ft. Wayne, Indiana, where he made the acquaintance and friendship of Chief Little Turtle" (Waggoner, p. 657). Sherman adds, "Before and after the War of 1812, he was engaged as a fur trader, with the Miamis and other tribes of



French Voyager Fur-Traders Campsite.

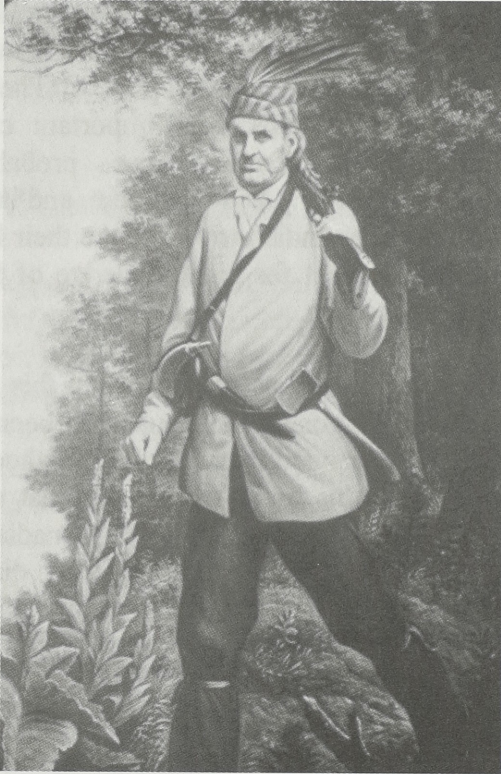
Indians for the American and Northwest Fur Company.” Voelker states that “Peter and his brothers carried on a profitable fur-trading business for five years. During that period, Peter journeyed extensively among the Indians and is said to have become friends with the Shawnee chief Tecumseh and his brother the ‘Prophet.’” The extent of Navarre’s close friendships with important chiefs like Little Turtle and Tecumseh has probably been exaggerated, but it is likely he knew them, and he certainly dealt actively with the Indian tribes, spoke their languages, and earned their respect for his knowledge of the woods and his physical abilities.

Several descriptions of Navarre at this time have been recorded. Waggoner’s, as usual, has been the most often quoted: “In woodcraft and Indian methods he was very skillful, while his bearing was ever that of a ‘born gentleman.’” Waggoner adds, “Beside Canadian French, he could speak the Pottawatomie Indian dialect, and partially those of other tribes” (Waggoner, p. 657).

The Michigan sources also stress Navarre’s knowledge of the woods and the ways of the Indians, as well as his physical strength and endurance. Voelker, who was familiar with Waggoner’s account, writes, “Historians have characterized Peter as tall and distinguished looking, possessed of gracious manners and conversant with many Indian dialects, as well as Canadian French, although backward in English. Moreover, his knowledge of the woods and his unusual physical endurance later earned him comparison to Daniel Boone” (Voelker, n.p.).

An essay from the 1920s among the Monroe County Historical Society papers gives a similar though more flowery description of Navarre at this time of life: “Peter Navarre never cared for nor did he acquire much of

the world's goods. His early life was amongst the Indians with whom he kept on terms of friendliness and who



Machen Portrait of Navarre in the Woods, 1867.

respected his integrity as that trait was marked in him in a very high degree.” The account goes on to describe his mental and physical abilities: “His hard struggle for the necessities of life denied him the opportunity of acquiring an education that would entitle him to be called educated, but he was a keen observer and ever on the alert. He was skilled in woods craft and knew the habits of the Indians and understood nature; he was fearless and physically a very strong man; his endurance was astounding and it was

those qualities that he used to advantage as a Scout and which enabled him to perform the feats that won a place for him in the history of this fair land.”

Navarre's obituary also gives a description of him as a young man: “Peter in his youth and prime has been described as being over six feet in height, slender and straight as an arrow, and swift and active as a panther. He excelled in all feats of agility, and especially in running had no equal among the red men. He retained his activity until late in life” (*Toledo Commercial*, March 21, 1874). There can be no doubt that Navarre did indeed possess an unusual degree of skill and endurance, as well as physical courage and dedication to the American cause during the War of 1812. With only mediocre success at earning a living after his move to the Maumee Valley, Navarre soon would have the chance to test his skills in the service of his country.

Navarre's first brush with warfare came on November 7th, 1811, at the Battle of Tippecanoe. Hosmer records that while returning from a fur trading expedition to Pottawatamie tribes near Chicago, Navarre and fellow-traveler John Songcraint happened to camp just a short distance from where the battle took place. General Harrison had arrived in the area that day, and Navarre saw the Indian chiefs leave camp and heard their remarks when they returned.

Hosmer continues the account: “At midnight [Navarre] was awakened by the noise made by the Indians while picking their flints. He was about to rise for the purpose of ascertaining the cause, but was told by Songcraint if he did, that the Indians would kill him. He kept still, and in two hours afterwards, heard the firing and clash of the battle, some three miles distant from him”

(Hosmer, p. 10). The next morning, he and Songcraint left the area secretly, avoiding Harrison's soldiers for fear they would shoot or hang him for collaborating with the Indians in the interests of the British.

Navarre's loyalty to America, however, never wavered, and it would not be long before he would more formally attach himself to Harrison's army. There his knowledge of the wilderness, as well as the ways and languages of the Indians, would be put to valuable use. During a period of only about fourteen months, from August 1812 to October 1813, Navarre would make his reputation and the legend of the pioneer scout would be born.

Chapter Three:

Navarre and the War of 1812

Part I

* - *

“We Have Met the Enemy”

* *

Allegiance to America

The number of books and references written about the War of 1812 pale in comparison to the other conflicts that have occurred in our nation's history. Professional scholars and amateur historians spend little time studying this second war of independence, and the average American can profess little knowledge of events or outcomes the American victory secured. Yet, the War of 1812 forever solidified the ideals of the American dream and Peter Navarre played a small, but crucial role in the war effort.

The question of allegiance to the American cause never entered Navarre's mind. He, along with his brothers Robert, Alexis, Jacques, Francis, and Antoine, were of French descent and had "no love of the British" (Marshall). Any effort to purge the area of the English was an opportunity not to be missed by the brothers. The Navarres attached themselves to General William Hull's army on the Maumee River in August 1812, then traveled to Detroit only to return to the River Raisin area and enlist with Colonel Anderson's regiment (Knapp, p. 534). The Navarre brothers became British prisoners of war when Hull surrendered his American force at Detroit without even a fight. Hull would eventually be court-martialed for this action and Peter later spoke bitterly about the general's cowardice under pressure. The brothers agreed to be paroled and traveled southward to continue aiding the Americans.

River Raisin Massacre

In January 1813, Peter and his brothers were asked by Colonels Lewis and Allen to become guides for the American force at the River Raisin (Hosmer, p. 16). While on a scouting expedition on the 21st, the Navarres returned to inform General James Winchester at Frenchtown (now Monroe, Michigan) that a large force of about 3,000 British and Indian troops were in the area and planning to attack him that night (Slocum, p. 310, Porter, p. 9, Hosmer, p. 17). Winchester discounted the Navarres' report and instead believed Jacques La Salle, also known as Jocko, who was a pro-British scout. Even the men under Winchester's command relayed information to the General suggesting an attack was imminent. His refusal to listen cost him dearly.

The American defeat at the River Raisin occurred on January 22, 1813. British Colonel Henry Proctor surprised the American army by surrounding the camp during the night and took numerous prisoners, including Winchester. Several hundred men who attempted to flee through the woods were surrounded and massacred by the Indians. The Navarre brothers withstood the battle by fighting from an old horse-mill not far from the camp (Hosmer, p. 18).



Aerial View of Presque Isle, c. 1920s.

With the defeat, the brothers feared death for participating with the Americans while still on parole, so they managed to escape the disaster by disguising themselves as Indians, jumping across the ice floes on the

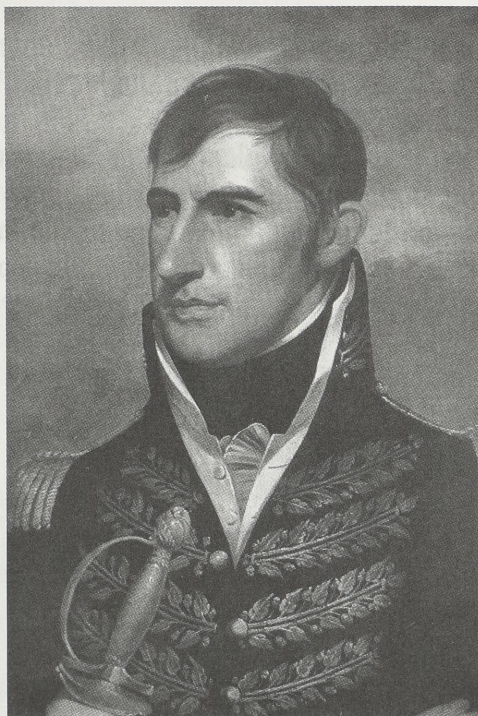
river, and advancing over the frozen ice of Lake Erie and Maumee Bay to reach Presque Isle near their home (Gunckel, p. 63, Hosmer, p. 18, Au, p. 39). Once they obtained ponies, they rode steadily until arriving at Fort Stephenson, which is now in present-day Fremont, Ohio.

Fort Meigs

After this narrow escape, Peter and Robert Navarre traveled to Fort Meigs and volunteered to assist General William Henry Harrison. The Fort, which had been constructed in February 1813, overlooked the Maumee River and was named after Ohio Governor Return Jonathan Meigs. Harrison arrived in April 1813 and the Navarres quickly became skilled couriers and spies for the general.



Aerial View of Reconstructed Fort Meigs.



General William Henry Harrison.

Accounts have recorded that Peter Navarre “discovered Indians crossing the Maumee River at the foot of the large island” and immediately reported their actions to Harrison (Hosmer, p. 21 and Knapp, p. 535). Upon receiving this information, Harrison sent Navarre to carry dispatches to Governor Meigs in Urbana, Ohio, and several army commanders at Lower and Upper Sandusky, requesting reinforcements for the impending battle (Keeler, p. 48, Hosmer, p. 21, Slocum, p. 336). Robert was also sent to the same locations with the message in case his brother Peter did not reach his destination. “Each brother rejoiced to learn of the safety of the other” (Draper, p. 149). Peter was present during the first siege of the fort,

from April 28 through May 5, in which the Americans survived the British and Indian onslaught.

Peter provided invaluable service to the American cause during this time. General Harrison grew to trust and rely heavily on Navarre's knowledge of the land and his experience in evading the enemy. He continued to accompany Harrison throughout the remainder of the war (Gunckel, p. 64).

Fort Stephenson

One of the more fanciful stories regarding Peter Navarre is the treacherous journey he endured to reach Fort Stephenson. Supposedly, he traveled from Fort Meigs over 30 miles of Indian infested swampland, through a terrible thunderstorm to Fort Stephenson in order to deliver a message sewn into the collar of his shirt. Navarre, interestingly, never once mentions this excursion in his 1866 memoirs or any other known reference. His chronicle of Fort Stephenson consists only of the following:

"In the month of June of the same year (1813) the English attacked Fort Stephenson at Sandusky. Gen. Harrison was then at Seneca Town, now Fremont. Col. Croghan, a young man, commanded the fort and defeated the English, who left 400 dead and retreated to Fort Malden, when they came."

When a siege failed to take Fort Meigs for the second time in late July 1813, British General Proctor moved on Fort Stephenson, which is now Fremont, but never called Seneca Town, as Navarre recalled. Major George Groghan commanded the fort and had 160 men,

compared to Proctor's 1,400. Fort Stephenson, built in the summer of 1812, was a smaller and less formidable post to attack than Fort Meigs. If destroyed or captured, communications between the Maumee River area and Cleveland would be interrupted. (Sugden, p. 345.)

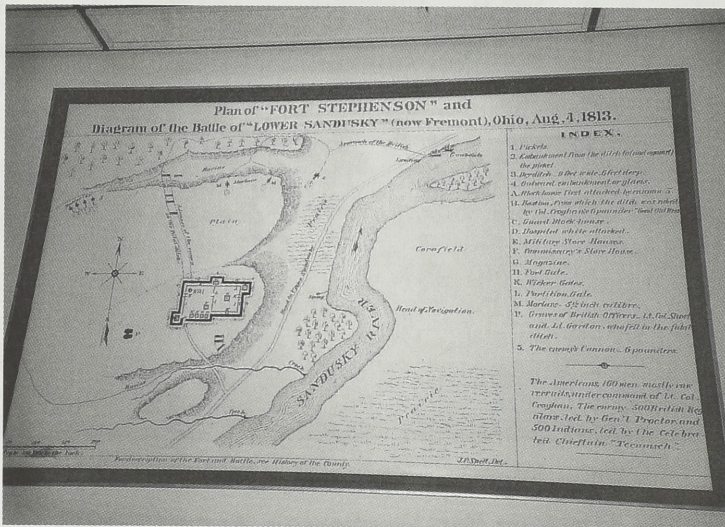


The Attack on Fort Stephenson, August 2, 1813.

General Harrison, in a dispatch sent late on July 29, 1813, ordered Major Croghan to abandon the fort. This is the message that Navarre was said to have carried. After reading the communication from Harrison, Croghan in turn replied, "We have determined to maintain this place, and by heaven, we will" (Greenblatt, p. 63).

Mid-afternoon, August 2, 1813, the British attacked from two sides. Proctor's guns were too small to do any great amount of damage to the fort, so a frontal assault was advanced. Shortly afterwards, Proctor ordered his troops to withdraw after witnessing the attack having

little effect on the fort. Ninety-six British and Indian men were killed or wounded. "Maj. Gen. Harrison remained in safety a few miles distant, listening to the cannonade, until he received a message from Major Croghan that the British were re-embarking in their boats." (Hitsman, p. 150.)



Fort Stephenson, Sandusky River, Fremont.

A friend of Peter Navarre related that Navarre traveled "upwards of thirty miles through almost untrodden wilderness, destitute of even an Indian trail. He reached Fort Stephenson in safety early in the following morning" with the orders and "arrived at Fort Meigs near midnight" (Bulkley, p. 507). In reality, General Harrison had long turned over command at Fort Meigs to General Green Clay after the first siege attempt by the British and

Indian coalition. When Harrison heard the news that Fort Meigs was invested for the second time, he immediately moved his headquarters to Seneca Town to organize a force for the relief of the besieged garrison (Goebel, p. 175). Records, which indicate Harrison convened a war council on July 29th at his headquarters at Fort Seneca, also confirm his presence at this location (McAfee, p. 347).

According to Keeler, Navarre did not make the trip because Harrison was simply not at Fort Meigs. Rather, Harrison was in command of his army at Fort Seneca on the Sandusky River (Keeler, p. 47). Historical accounts give credit to John Connor and two Indians for the attempt to deliver Harrison's commands (Cleaves, p. 181). Connor and the Indians left Harrison's headquarters at Seneca late in the evening on the 29th and arrived at Fort Stephenson on July 30th around sundown. Captain Robert McAfee also corroborated Conner's achievement (McAfee, p. 348). McAfee, who served under Colonel Richard Johnson in the Kentucky regiment, penned his narrative of the entire war in 1816 based on his own personal experiences, interviews, and journals that had been kept by soldiers. His insight into the affair holds more merit than other references since he wrote his account so soon after the conclusion of the war.

Based on the fact that John Connor is recognized as the courier and that Harrison was not even at Fort Meigs, the tradition of Navarre's journey must be erroneous. Perhaps he was mistaken and confused the issue with the time he and his brothers escaped from the River Raisin massacre by traveling across the ice of Western Lake Erie, acquired ponies, and rode to Fort Stephenson. Or more likely is the suggestion that Navarre was referring to dispatches he delivered during the first siege of Fort Meigs in May, when he was sent with

messages to Upper and Lower Sandusky, and also to Urbana, Ohio.

Even though Navarre does not mention the Fort Stephenson event specifically in his memoir, it is quite possible that he shared his interpretation of the expedition during meetings of the Maumee Valley Pioneer Association. He spent the latter years of his life as president of this organization and would often regale members with his wartime experiences. The Fort Stephenson tale continued to grow as it received acknowledgement in Clark Waggoner's *History of Toledo and Lucas County*, published in 1888, John Bulkley's article "Peter Navarre, The Scout," in 1913, and in *The Toledo Blade* in 1937.

Although it is certain that Navarre did not save Fort Stephenson with his purported trip, we will never know why he allowed this false story to continue. Conceivably, his advanced years, his recollection of memorial knowledge, or his own natural human tendency to exaggerate his exploits all contributed to this myth of Peter Navarre's most arduous journey.

Chapter Four:

Navarre and the War of 1812

Part II

* _ *

“And They Are Ours”

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Battle of Lake Erie

The 352-foot Perry’s Victory and International Peace Memorial now towers over the small island of Put-in-Bay in Lake Erie. It was near here on September 10, 1813, that Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry’s stunning defeat of the British fleet opened the waterways for General Harrison and his army to advance into Canada. “In one of the most famous military dispatches in American history, Perry passed the news to Harrison with the words: ‘We have met the enemy, and they are ours.’” (Immell, p. 89). Armed with this information, Harrison released his men to pursue the enemy by way of Fort

Malden near Detroit, enter Canada, and ultimately secure victory over the British forces led by Henry Proctor at the Battle of the Thames. Perry's ships played an instrumental role by ferrying the troops across Lake Erie to the fort.



Perry's Victory Monument, Put-in-Bay.

Without a doubt, Peter Navarre's greatest contribution to the American army occurred just prior to this strategic victory in the War of 1812. On August 5, 1813, Navarre traveled from Port Clinton with a dispatch from Perry to Harrison's headquarters at Fort Seneca

(Cave, p. 9). Perry desperately needed more men for the approaching battle with the British warships and made the request through Navarre's communication. Harrison was able to send approximately seventy Kentucky sharpshooters, led back by Navarre to aid Perry's troops (Porter, p. 11). Although these Kentuckians had never served on a ship, Perry was grateful for anyone who could fire a gun.



Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry.

Navarre also provided valuable and specific intelligence for Perry from Harrison on September 3rd. The message read: "the British are getting ready to sail, under command of Commodore Barclay, with six vessels" (Gunckel, p. 76).

The day before the Battle of Lake Erie, Navarre, disguised as an Indian, crossed through British lines once again and delivered Harrison's order that Perry should engage the enemy immediately (Cave, p. 9 and Hosmer, p. 24). Navarre completed the trip on September 9th, the date set aside by the City of Toledo in 1922 to officially celebrate Peter Navarre Day. His skill and ability to penetrate through enemy-controlled territory, successfully conveying Harrison's commands, forever earned Navarre a respected place in American history. Lieutenant Dulaney Forrest, chief signal officer of the *Lawrence*, delivered Perry's famous message, "We have met the enemy, and they are ours," to Harrison at Camp Seneca (Cleaves, p. 187). It is highly likely that Navarre led that officer back through the woods with the news of the American victory.



Perry and the Battle of Lake Erie, Sept. 10, 1813.

British General Proctor, who recognized the threat that Navarre's wilderness instinct could be to the British forces, placed a bounty of \$1,000 (200 British pounds sterling) on the scalps of Peter and his brother Robert. However, sources disagree on the exact timing of when this reward for the Navarre brothers was offered. Some records list the bounty being announced shortly after Hull's surrender near Detroit (Cave, p. 251), while others state the prize was publicized after the Battle of the Thames (Knapp, p. 535). In a Toledo Blade interview with Navarre in June 1872, Navarre recollected the bounty being declared after the Battle of the Thames and that "if Proctor wanted it, he must secure it himself" (The Blade, 1872, and Knapp, p. 535). Regardless of when it was offered, the incentive signified Proctor's frustration with Navarre's knowledge of the land and the detriment his expertise could conceivably pose on the British army.

Battle of the Thames

From the end of the War of 1812 to the great conflict that divided the American nation, the question that plagued the republic was: "Rumpsey, dumpsey. Who killed Tecumseh?" (Mayo, p. 446.)

The famed Shawnee Indian warrior, Tecumseh, gathered his followers together on October 4, 1813, near Moraviantown, Ontario, Canada, to prophesize that he would not survive the battle which was to occur the following day. A hushed silence fell among his people as he predicted his impending death and adhered to the old Indian custom of distributing his belongings to friends and family members. The "crouching panther" had aligned himself and other tribes with the British during the War of 1812 in hope of preserving the Indian nation as he knew it.

His dream would be shattered by false promises from the British generals and the government he served. With Tecumseh's death on October 5th at the Battle of the Thames, the members of the Indian federation, that he had painstakingly built with his diplomatic skills, faded back into the forests from which they came.

In 1866, Peter Navarre was solicited by John E. Gunckel to record his memoirs for the book *The Early History of the Maumee Valley*. Although Navarre could not read or write, he agreed to dictate his life story and sign his "X" to indicate the validity of the document. While recalling his service during the War of 1812, Navarre made a startling claim to not only have killed Tecumseh single-handedly, but that he also buried the body the following day after the battle.

Navarre's testimony includes: "*Col. Johnson, under whose command I fought, was wounded and had his horse killed under him. While he was down, Tecumseh sprang from behind a tree to tomahawk and scalp him. I saw an Indian pouncing upon my Colonel and fired with his gun upon him. He fell and the war cry of Tecumseh was heard no more.*"

Navarre continues: "*On the next morning early, Gen. Harrison commanded Medard LaBadie and me to help look for the remains of Tecumseh. We repaired to the place where Col. Johnson had been wounded and found the Indian killed by me. The Indian dead had been mutilated and disfigured. The convincing proof of the identity of the man, however, was a large scar, caused by a very severe burn on his right thigh. Gen. Harrison, who knew Tecumseh intimately, thought of this and having examined the corpse, we at once knew it was he.*"

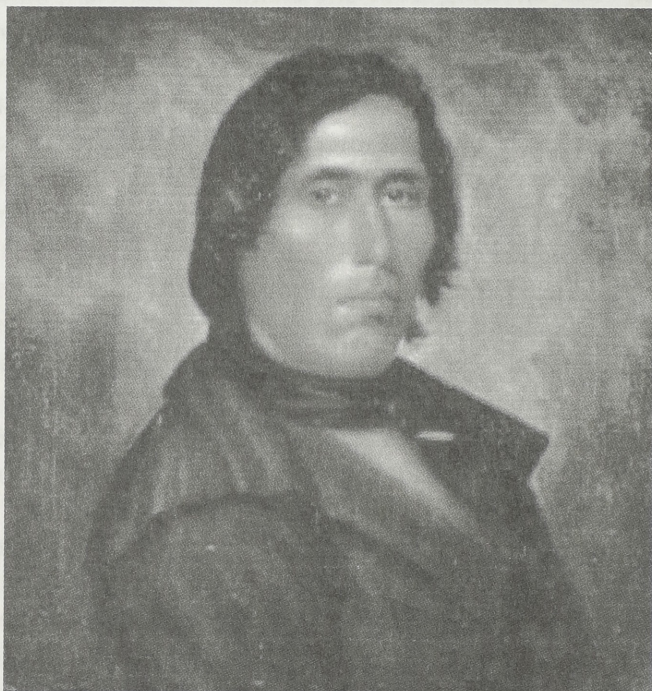
In the years that followed Tecumseh's death, vast debates emerged as to who actually killed the great leader. "No less than forty-five accounts of Tecumseh's death exist, each differing from one another in various points or details of circumstances" (Tucker, p. 7). The reports ranged from Colonel Richard Johnson shooting Tecumseh when he was about to be scalped, to an outlandish story that Tecumseh survived the battle to fight another day. None of these versions, however, mentioned the name of Peter Navarre.

The Battle of the Thames occurred after the sieges of Fort Meigs and Commodore Perry's surprising victory on Lake Erie. The American force led by General Harrison reached the mouth of the Thames River in Ontario late on October 2, 1813, and they outnumbered their British and Indian counterparts two to one. Stories tell of Tecumseh walking up and down the line encouraging his soldiers and shaking hands with some of the British officers. When the battle commenced, his voice was heard booming above the fray and the horrors of warfare. Colonel Johnson, who was on the left flank of Harrison's army, ordered his men forward on their horses to charge the Indians waiting before him.

The Death of Tecumseh

It ended almost as quickly as it began. Within twenty minutes, Tecumseh lay dead on the field. As soon as the Indians realized they could no longer hear the voice of their leader, they retreated and dispersed into the woods. The Americans had won the battle and had captured approximately six hundred enemy soldiers. Thirty-three Indian bodies were found on the field as well, but General Harrison strongly believed that many more warriors had

been carried away by their fellow Indian braves (Dillon, p. 175).



Tecumseh.

Shortly after the battle, eyewitnesses gave Colonel Johnson credit for killing Tecumseh. Observers stated that Tecumseh raised his tomahawk at the very moment when Johnson fired (Barry, p. 58). The colonel received accolades many years afterward for the slaying, and in fact, the story was used to promote his political career. A lithograph by John Dorival in 1833 of Johnson shooting Tecumseh was produced to accompany the Democratic campaign, "Rumpsey, dumpsey, rumpsey, dumpsey, Colonel Johnson killed Tecumseh!" (Dillon, p. 177).

Johnson went on to become Vice-President of the United States in 1837 under Martin Van Buren.

Other sources provide further evidence to support Johnson's claim. "Tecumseh was shot by a petite gun, which Col. Johnson drew from his breast. This was sworn to by one Shabbona—a Sac warrior—who was a eye-witness to the affair" (Johnston, p. 337). Also, Captain McAfee, who participated in the battle and was left in charge of the obtained prisoners, was certain that Johnson did kill Tecumseh with his pistol (McAfee, p. 426).



The death of Tecumseh. The lithograph is highly inaccurate and romanticized.

While most historians believe that the circumstances surrounding Johnson's claim are credible, others who were present at the battle testified "the man Johnson killed was much taller, larger, and darker than

Tecumseh. And his eyes were black, not hazel” (Immell, p. 96). American Privates King and Whitley were also given acknowledgment for shooting the Indian chief by some witnesses (Dillon, p. 174).

The specific details regarding the last few moments of Tecumseh’s life will probably never prove conclusively who killed him. However, the evidence strongly suggests it was not Peter Navarre. Navarre’s assertion that he shot Tecumseh is not supported by eye-witness reports or any historical reference.

According to John Sugden, only five Americans at the Battle of the Thames knew Tecumseh intimately enough to positively identify the warrior. These men included General Harrison, Anthony Shane, Simon Kenton, and the Connor brothers (Sugden, p. 173). Sugden continues by stating that other reports carry “more conviction than Navarre, who advanced doubtful pretension to have known Tecumseh and interspersed his anecdotes with manifestly fictitious elements” (Sugden, p. 145). Another author, Alfred Cave, believed that “Navarre’s credibility was undermined by his patently false assertion that he was closely acquainted with Tecumseh” (Cave, p. 9).

Nor was there any suggestion of Navarre slaying Tecumseh in Hosmer and Harris’s 1858 book, *The Early History of the Maumee Valley*, or in Lyman C. Draper’s interviews with Navarre in 1863 and 1866. The story was not mentioned in Waggoner’s comprehensive book on the history of early Toledo either. In fact, Peter Navarre’s claim only surfaces in his memoirs when he is nearly seventy years old.

Doubt is also raised concerning Navarre's declaration that he helped bury the famed Indian chief. Researchers cannot decisively say whether or not Tecumseh's body was left on the field and properly identified. Tecumseh's closest companions said they had buried his body themselves in the forest (Shorto, p. 122). Chief Black Hawk, who was present at the battle, also confirmed the stories of retrieving Tecumseh's body (Cleaves, p. 205). Although the Americans felt confident the body they buried was that of Tecumseh, a wounded and captured interpreter for the British troops "swore that the body was not his at all" (Dillon, p. 175).

Of the Americans who were listed to have known Tecumseh, Kenton doubted the body was his, Shane and Connor stated it was, while Harrison was so unsure that he did not write about it in his official dispatch on October 9th (Sugden, LS, p. 173). Yet, conflicting accounts have surfaced telling that Harrison was able to identify the body based on a large scar that Tecumseh had received as a result from a burn when he was younger. Other witnesses, however, must have concluded the body was surely that of Tecumseh before they began to mutilate and disfigure it.

Navarre's own obituary in the *Toledo Commercial* on March 21, 1874, quoted him as saying that Tecumseh "was shot several times, but otherwise his body was not mutilated in the least, being buried in his regimentals, as the old chief desired by myself and a companion, at the command of General Harrison." It is highly unlikely that Tecumseh would have chosen to be buried in British regimentals as opposed to his own traditional Indian dress. A more plausible solution is that Tecumseh's remains were removed by his own warriors under the cover of darkness and buried in a secret location (Greenblatt, p. 64), and that another Indian who fell near the same location as

Tecumseh was misidentified and buried by the Americans. Perhaps it was this Indian that Peter helped to bury.

Once again the question is raised as to why Navarre would make such untrue statements. By the time his claim of killing Tecumseh surfaced in 1866, he was already a highly respected citizen and revered pioneer. Maybe it was the solicitation for Gunckel's book that encouraged Navarre to embellish the truth, or that he simply believed he had slain Tecumseh through a distortion of his personal remembrances. Regardless of the reason, the legend persisted to grow long after his death.

His memoirs that were published again in the Toledo Sunday Times on February 8, 1931, entitled "Navarre Killed Tecumseh," further enhanced the myth (see pp. 19-25). An incredible story was printed in the Toledo Blade on March 30, 1952, which not only recounted how Navarre shot the Indian warrior, but included imaginary dialogue and was filled with inaccurate information (see p. 26). Readers of the article were grossly misled into believing that Peter Navarre was the savior of Northwest Ohio during the War of 1812. But even though Navarre was unquestionably a valued asset and knowledgeable scout to General Harrison throughout the conflict, he nevertheless should not receive recognition for falsified credentials. "Rumpsey, dumpsey, Navarre most certainly did not kill Tecumseh!"

Chapter Five:

Peter Navarre after the War

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“A Man of the Woods”

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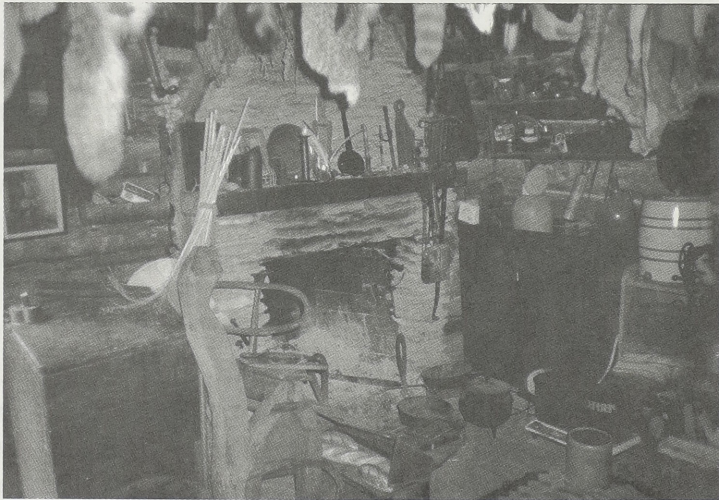
“After the Battle of the Thames, we returned to Detroit and I was there relieved from service and returned to Presque Isle on the Maumee River. After having obtained my honorable discharge” (Memoirs, Gunckel, pp. 65-66).

The closure of the War of 1812 once again brought obscurity to Peter Navarre. Very little was written and documented about his life and family following the war. Not until the late 1850s does more information surface regarding his activities when he becomes somewhat of a local legend, as historians begin recounting his accomplishments. Unfortunately, by that time

memories had eroded and fiction was often intertwined with fact.

Fur Trader and Farmer

Navarre returned to his family homestead and continued to pursue his former career of fur trading. He “was probably the Pierre Navarre who was employed in the St. Joseph’s and Kankakee Outfit of the American Fur Company in 1820” (Bridgewater, pp. 395-396). Through his travels with this business, he visited such locations as Wabash, Lake Superior, Upper Mississippi, and the Rocky Mountains (Draper, p. 149). Records state though that Navarre was fired from this position after a dispute with his employer.



Furs in the Navarre Cabin, Toledo Botanical Gardens.

He was then hired by William Wallace, owner of another fur trading company near Terra Haute, Indiana, and was again fired from that position (Bridgewater, pp. 395-396). Based on these two incidents, one could speculate that Navarre had a brash personality and presented some difficulties for his employers. With his unsuccessful return to the fur trade, he also resorted to farming, with mixed results, to help support his growing family.

As stated in Chapter Two, Navarre's first wives, Catherine Susor (prior to 1815) and Geneveva Robert (1825), produced no children who survived infancy. His marriage to Catherine Bourdeau, however, was to last and they would rear a family of six sons and two daughters. The lives of Navarre's children and of other descendants are discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

The Navarre brothers, Peter, Jacques, Robert, Antoine, and Alexis, were living near Presque Isle in 1833 when they received 800 acres of land from the Ottawa Indians (Tucker, p. 8, and Slocum, p. 416). The February 18, 1833, Maumee Treaty provided this land to the Navarre family and stated that they "have long resided among these Aborigines: intermarried with them, and been valuable friends" (Slocum, p. 417). According to Waggoner, only two years later, on November 18, 1835, the Navarres sold 60 acres of this land for \$800 to George B. Knaggs. Peter's wife, Catherine, along with Jacques Navarre's wife, who was also Catherine, signed the formal land transaction deed for the sale (Waggoner, p. 852).

Two of Peter's brothers, Robert and James (Jacques), who served with him in the War of 1812, died during the 1840s. James passed away in 1841 at age 68, and though married left no descendants. Robert died in

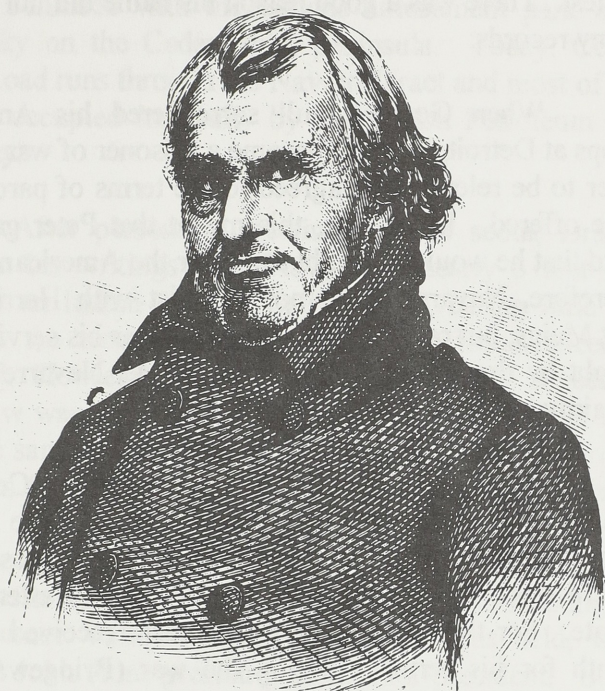
1846 at the age of 65, leaving five sons and five daughters (Draper, p. 143). A monument to Peter and Robert was erected at Navarre Park in 1914 in honor of their valuable service as scouts for General Harrison during the war.

Local Fame

The 1850s and 1860s brought increasing fame to the life of Peter Navarre, as local historians began to record and preserve events that occurred in the Maumee Valley and the Toledo area. H. S. Hosmer and W. H. Harris interviewed Navarre and wrote one of the earliest accounts of the Northwest Ohio area. Their book was published in 1858 and it contained numerous references to Navarre's exploits during the war. The book even attempted to reconstruct dialogue between Navarre and others.

September 24, 1860, provided an interesting opportunity for Peter to narrate his Fort Meigs experiences to Benson J. Lossing, who would later create the *Pictorial Fieldbook of the War of 1812*. Navarre, who had come into Toledo for business, traveled in a carriage with Lossing and Hosmer to the fort. He is described as "a stout-built man, of dark complexion" who "speaks English imperfectly, as the Canadian French usually do" (Lossing, p. 490).

The gentlemen returned to Toledo later that night, dined at the Oliver House (built the year before and still standing on the middlegrounds, it is currently the home of the Maumee Bay Brewing Company restaurant). Then they had "a stroll about the really fine little city of Toledo," after which Navarre departed company with Lossing and Hosmer.



PETER NAVARRE

Portrait of Navarre at 60, in Lossing's *Fieldbook*.

Lossing described Navarre as an "authentic and intelligent guide to every place of interest at and around Fort Meigs" (Lossing, p. 493).

With Navarre's increasing family size and meager income from farming, he recognized the need for additional income and sought it from the Federal government in the form of a pension for his war service. Because his name, however, was not on any enlistment

papers from the War of 1812, the government denied his request. There was a good reason his name did not appear in any records.

When General Hull surrendered his American troops at Detroit, Navarre became a prisoner of war, and in order to be released, he agreed to the terms of parole that were offered. In essence, this meant that Peter gave his word that he would not fight again for the American cause. Therefore, Navarre could not re-enlist with Harrison at Fort Meigs, but rather could only volunteer his services. If caught by the British for breaking parole, Navarre would certainly have cause to fear for his life.

In 1864, a special bill went before Congress asking for his pension (Waggoner, p. 657). The Senate committee in charge reported against the proposal, but nevertheless, the pension was finally granted after much debate. For the rest of his life, Navarre received \$8 per month for his services during the war (Bridgewater, p. 396, and Cave, p. 251). This extra income allowed him some financial relief in his last years.

Some of the important documentation regarding Navarre's later life can be located in the Draper interviews. Lyman C. Draper traveled extensively throughout the Midwest and Southeastern states for a period of over forty years collecting manuscripts and conducting interviews. His massive anthology was donated to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin upon his death in 1891, and has been referenced by researchers countless times over the years.

Draper located Navarre on July 27, 1863, near Cedar Point, Ohio, which was the region a few miles east of the Otter Creek and Maumee River junction. This land, called the Navarre Tract, was given to the family for their

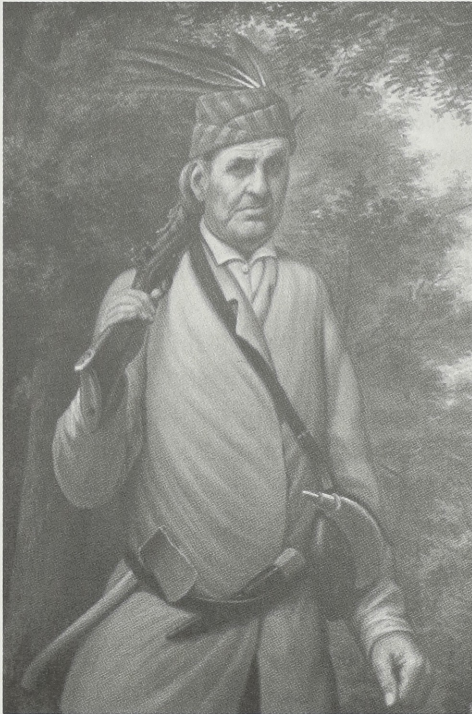
services to the American cause during the war, and should not be confused with the famous amusement park near Sandusky on the Cedar Point peninsula. Today, Cedar Point Road runs through the Navarre Tract and most of the land is occupied ironically by the British Petroleum Oil Refinery.

After personally meeting the old scout, Draper notes in his writings that "Navarre is nearly 6 feet—as erect as an Indian—a fine walker at 75, caring little for trails in the woods—a bright-eyed and always cheerful [fellow]. He weighs 140 lbs" (Draper, p. 150). A second interview was conducted with Navarre in 1866. This was also the same year that John Gunckel requested Navarre's memoirs for his book, *The Early History of the Maumee Valley*.

On March 7, 1864, the first organized meeting of the Maumee Valley Pioneer Association was held, with General John Hunt presiding as its first president. Soon afterwards, Navarre became president of the organization and served in that capacity for about ten years during the remainder of his life. This society has continued its long existence, changing its name in 1918 to the Historical Society of Northwestern Ohio (Sherman, p. 3). It survives today as the Maumee Valley Historical Society based at the Wolcott House in Maumee, Ohio. There also exists today the Peter Navarre Chapter of the Daughters of 1812.

In 1867, a Toledo merchant named Henry Hall commissioned the well-known artist, William H. Machen, to paint a portrait of Peter Navarre. A biography in a Toledo Zoo pamphlet mentions that Machen was the organist at St. Frances de Sales Parish at Cherry and Superior, the church Navarre attended before St. Louis was organized in East Toledo in 1870-71. The painting

depicts Navarre full-length walking through the woods and carrying his gun over his shoulder. Hall owned the painting and Navarre gave him his gun as a means of preserving relics from the War of 1812 (see Navarre memoirs). For many years it hung in Hall's home at 13th Street and Madison Avenue, which was also the first home of the Toledo Museum of Art.



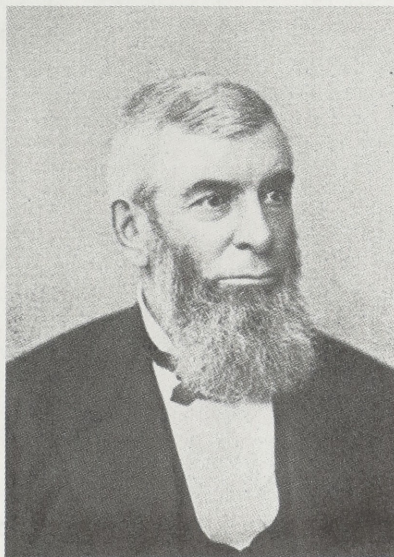
Detail from the Machen Painting of Peter Navarre.

After Hall's death, the painting was placed in the historical collection housed at Veterans Memorial Hall at Adams and Ontario. For a time it hung in the lobby of the Commodore Perry Hotel along with Navarre's gun before being moved with other historical artifacts to the museum

at the Toledo Zoo. Finally, the painting and gun found a home in the local history room of the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library.

Last Years

In June 1870, fifty-seven years after the sieges at Fort Meigs, a reunion was held for those veterans still living who were participants in the battles. Navarre's name appears on the roster of those in attendance, and he is listed to be 85 years of age. Morrison R. Waite, the well-known Maumee lawyer who would soon become the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, met with the veterans, some of whom journeyed from as far away as Kentucky to attend. They traveled by train and arrived at 5:00 in Perrysburg on June 23rd. Mayor J. R. Tyles of Perrysburg began the ceremonies the following morning.



Morrison R. Waite, Chief Justice 1874-1888.

The former soldiers looked around the old battle-grounds and recounted their war stories. Colonel Charles Todd, who was an aid to Harrison during the war, was the main speaker and proudly displayed the flag that flew over Fort Meigs those many years ago, but which still bore its British bullet holes. Several dinners were held, one in Maumee and another at the Oliver House in Toledo, which Peter attended. The latter was built in 1859 by Major William Oliver, a trusted subordinate of Harrison, and was the finest hotel in Toledo. Major Oliver's daughter, Mrs. Harriet O. Hall, invited the men for this dinner (Waggoner, pp. 64-65).



Oliver House, Toledo, Ohio, Built 1859.

A year later, another reunion was held on June 15, 1871. This time it was for the nineteen survivors of the River Raisin Massacre. They met at Monroe, Michigan,

where a banquet was given in their honor. One of the guest speakers was General George Armstrong Custer, the soon-to-be famous Indian fighter who would not survive a later massacre at the Little Big Horn in 1876. Custer had already attained national prominence as a general in the Civil War, and he was chosen to speak because his father was one of the survivors being honored.

Peter Navarre participated in all the activities of this reunion; however, his age was listed at this time as 82 (Waggoner, pp. 64-65). Apparently, even his peers were not exactly sure of Navarre's age, another example of the inconsistency in recording his birth year. Fortunately, though, a photograph was taken at this 1871 reunion, and it has been preserved to the present time.



Photo of 1813 River Raisin Massacre Survivors, 1871.

In the photograph, Peter Navarre is seated on the ground at the left of the first row. General Custer is in the middle of the back row and his father is in the front row, third from the left. It is a remarkable photograph of a group of remarkable men.

Peter Navarre lived in cabins on the frontier all of his life. By all accounts he remained in robust health into his old age, and continued his practice of walking miles through the woods every day. The *Toledo Blade* article recording his reminiscences claims that on May 30th, 1872, at the age of 86 (probably 82), he walked "from the River Raisin to this city, a distance of 26 miles" (*Toledo Blade*, June 11, 1872).



Navarre Cabin, Early View in Navarre Park.

Like so many historical details of his life, the cabin most associated with Navarre cannot be dated for certain. It was probably built for him by his son Peter, Jr., during the 1860s on land owned by Navarre's friend Enos Mominee. Mominee's farm is shown on the 1875 plat map of Oregon Township, and was located out Corduroy Road near Norden Road. This is consistent with references to Navarre's residence at Big Ditch, the earlier name for Stadium Road during the draining of the Black Swamp. It was this later cabin that was moved from the old Mominee property to Navarre Park in 1922, and that currently resides at Toledo Botanical Gardens. See Chapter Seven for more information about the Navarre cabin.

By June 1872, "Peter was residing on Big Ditch Road with his wife and family about 6 miles east of Toledo" (Tucker, p. 8). He provided what appears to be his last interview to the *Toledo Blade* on the 11th of that month, telling his life story once again.

Early in 1874 Navarre became ill and had to be moved from his cabin to the East Toledo home of his friend, J. Kent Seaman, who provided care for him. When Seaman had to travel to St. Louis, Navarre was transported to the Temperance Hotel on Front Street run by Mrs. Rogers. It was located just south of Bridge (Main) Street about where the McDonald's restaurant now stands. It was here that Peter Navarre died on March 20, 1874.



Photo of Navarres, Pearson Pk.

Chapter Six:

Navarre Descendants

* - *

“May Their Tribe Increase”

* *

“Yesterday the venerable Peter Navarre died in East Toledo, at the boarding house of Mrs. Rogers, and thus closed the life of one who played a distinguished part in the terrible struggle which secured to us the possession of all this Northwestern territory” (*Toledo Commercial*, March 21, 1874).

The passing of Peter Navarre not only ended a vital chapter in the beginnings of East Toledo, but of those early settlers who had fought in the War of 1812 as well. His funeral was held at St. Louis (French) Catholic Church on Sixth Street in East Toledo on a Saturday afternoon. The casket was simple with only a nameplate and an American flag covering it. Reverend Fathers Felix

Geauthiere and John Quinn officiated the ceremony. The obituary in the *Toledo Commercial* referred to the service as a lesson in patriotism and a debt that was owed to those who served. Following the funeral, a procession was formed, marched across the Cherry Street Bridge, and continued to St. Mary's Cemetery on the corner of Manhattan and Lagrange. There the Zouaves fired three rifle volleys over the grave of the heroic scout.



St. Louis Parish, East Toledo.

Though the old scout died over a hundred and twenty-five years ago, it is difficult to wander very far in Northwest Ohio without encountering the name of Navarre. Denissen's two-volume genealogy lists hundreds and hundreds of Navarres descended from the first Robert Navarre in America. Just two of his nine children, for example, produced twenty-seven children of their own: his son Robert having fifteen, and his son Francis (Peter's father) having twelve. Peter himself had eight children who lived into adulthood.

The Children of Peter Navarre

Peter's surviving children, all born to Catherine Bourdeau, are listed as follows:

Peter, Jr., 1831-1901.

James Pierre, 1832-1912.

Daniel, 1835-1912.

Eli, born October 1838.

Oliver Benjamin, 1839-1925.

Lambert, 1844-1915.

Susanna, before 1846-after 1925.

Zoa (sometimes referred to as Mary).

All of the sons inherited the military spirit of their father, and all of them served in the Union army during the Civil War (*Toledo Commercial* obituary, March 21, 1874, and *Toledo Blade*, November 10, 1925). Some sources say only four or five brothers served, but it seems as though they all did. Oliver also re-enlisted in the regular army following the Civil War.

Several of the sons must also have followed their father in the fur trade. Draper reported that three of the boys "caught \$500 worth of furs and skins in the spring of 1856 within twelve or fifteen miles of Toledo" (Sherman, p. 3).

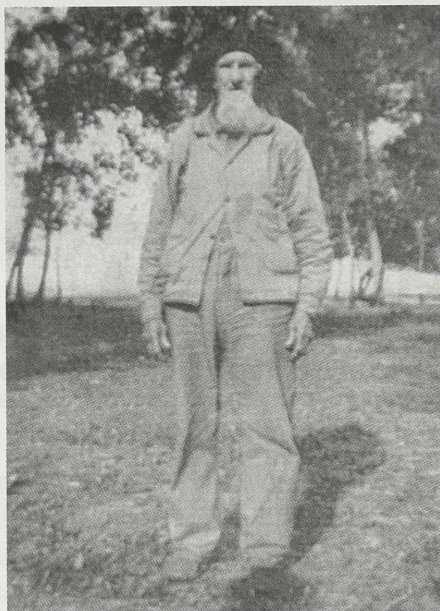
Not much is known about Peter Navarre, Jr. He built the cabin out on the Mominee farm, either for himself or for his father, and that is the cabin that has survived to this day. He served in the Civil War in the Ohio Volunteer Infantry, and died at Little Sisters of the Poor in 1901.

Little is known about the life of James Pierre Navarre as well. He also fought in the Civil War, Ohio

Volunteer Infantry, and was a member of the Ford Post, G.A.R. According to George Pearson, he was living on Fifth Street in East Toledo in 1905. He was not present at the dedication of the Navarre monument, having died in Toledo in 1912.

As a young man, Lambert Navarre also served in the Ohio Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War, and by 1905 was living in Jerusalem Township. He was a resident of Point Place in 1914, and died the following year. He is buried at Willow Cemetery.

Daniel Navarre was in Co. G, Regular U.S. Heavy Artillery during the Civil War. He enlisted on July 28, 1862 at the age of 25. Later, he was captured and held for

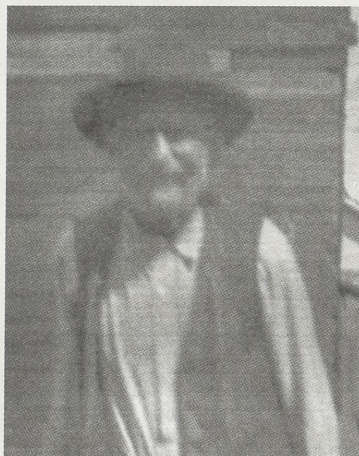


Daniel Navarre, 1835-1912.

a time in Libbey Prison. After his release, he was transferred in 1865 to the Veterans Reserve Corps. After the war, Daniel worked in the fishing business for Tom Wolfe, who had a large home at the mouth of Ward's Canal. He also took care of the cattle which supplied the men with milk and butter (Fassett, pp. 248-249).

As an older man, Dan grew a long beard, and children would follow him around to hear his tales of the war. He also would play his violin and sing for them. Wilmot Ketcham, in his poem *Christmas Time at the Point* gave a sketch of Dan as a fine old man entertaining the children. A painting of Dan Navarre, by Ludwig Bang, was given to the Peter Navarre Memorial Association and was hung in the cabin when it was at the Toledo Zoo.

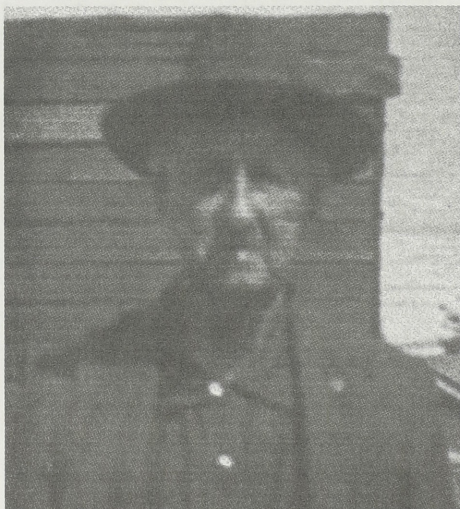
Dan was a bachelor, and as he got older he spent his time among relatives near Momineetown working for his room and board. On August 27, 1910, he entered the Ohio Soldiers Home at Sandusky, Ohio, and died there on April 1, 1912. He is buried at the cemetery at the Home, Section 1, grave 34.



Eli Navarre.

Eli Navarre enlisted at the age of 26 in Co. A, 25th Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry, commanded by Captain William Scott, and served until the end of the Civil War. He was wounded in the left foot at the battle of Honey Hill, South Carolina, and was mustered out of the army on October 6, 1865, at the end of his term of service. After the war he returned home and worked as a farm laborer in the Momineetown area. Although living in the Sandusky Soldiers' Home by 1914, he was present at the unveiling of the Navarre monument at Navarre Park.

Oliver Benjamin Navarre, the last surviving son of Peter Navarre, also served in the Ohio Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War, enlisting on August 23, 1861, at the age of 32, and fighting for the Union cause throughout the four years of the conflict. Following the war, Oliver found civilian life too uneventful and re-enlisted in the regular army five years later in 1870. He became a trooper in the Seventh U.S. Cavalry and fought in the Indian campaigns in the Dakotas for the next twenty-five years.



Oliver Navarre, 1839-1925.

In 1905, he was living out in Momineetown, but by 1914 he had moved in to East Toledo. He was present at the dedication of the Navarre monument, the dedication of the Navarre cabin, and in 1923 he raised the flag at the ceremony dedicating the Peter Navarre marker in Mount Carmel Cemetery. He died on November 9, 1925, at his East Side residence, 314 Steadman Street, at the age of 85. He was buried in Willow Cemetery, survived by his wife Adeline, and his sister Susan.

Susanna Navarre, Peter's oldest daughter, never married. She lived with a family from Detroit, and late in life seems to have traveled with them to either South America or Cuba. Though living in Detroit, she was present in 1914 at the unveiling of the monument in Navarre Park. In her brother Oliver's obituary, she is mentioned as a survivor living in Havana, Cuba (*Toledo Blade*, November 10, 1925).

Peter's other daughter, Zoa, married Adolphus Nadeau (sometimes spelled Neddeau or Neddo), a native of Monroe, Michigan. She also was at Navarre Park for the dedication of the monument in 1914, and was living in Toledo at the time. She died sometime before her brother Oliver in 1925.

Other Navarre Descendants

Robert R. Navarre, the son of Peter's older brother Robert who also was a scout during the War of 1812 and is remembered on the Navarre monument, was another prominent East Side pioneer. Robert R. Navarre grew up playing with the Indians out on the Navarre Tract near Presque Isle. He remembered the Indians as always being truthful and trustworthy.



Robert R. Navarre, Son of Peter's Brother Robert.

Later in his life, he and his wife Maria lived in East Toledo at 1712 Cutter Street (now numbered in the 1500 block). He had fourteen children. He died on January 7, 1914, at the home of his son William, who lived nearby. William was the great-grandfather of Navarre historian Marshall Lloyd.

Robert C. Navarre was another descendant well-known in the East Side area. He was a lighthouse keeper and lived for many years in the old Ironville area out Front Street.

The family of Peter's brother Alexis Navarre has also been well documented. Alexis, born in 1800, built a

cabin out along Otter Creek near where Peter had built his first cabin. Later the family constructed a fine wooden house, which later was moved to the Bay Shore Road, and still stands to this day across from the Toledo Edison plant.



Alexis Navarre Home, Bay Shore Area, 1880s.

Alexis had died in 1864, but his wife Mary Ann is seated fourth from the right, next to her son-in-law, Cad Williams. Cad's wife Elizabeth, daughter of Alexis and Mary Ann, is standing second from the left. Cad Williams fought in the Civil War, and his sword is now in the collection of the East Toledo Historical Society. Much of this information has been preserved and presented to the Canaday Center at The University of Toledo by Helen Lang, the granddaughter of Cad and Elizabeth Williams.

During the 1890s, many photographs were taken of the Navarres by Cleo Keller, a friend of the family. The

Kellers and the Alexis Navarre and Williams families were neighbors along the Bay Shore Road. Gabriella (Gay) Navarre married Guy Houk and taught for many years at the small school on Otter Creek Road near Consaul Street.



Gay Navarre, 1890s, Cleo Keller Photograph.

Jennie Navarre, Gay's sister, also stayed in the area and is pictured in many of the photographs. The Keller photos give a feeling for the way of life among these families during those years just before the turn of the century. They played piano in the parlors, walked to parties along Bay Shore Road, played croquet on the lawns, and posed for humorous pictures with fake swords and guns. Descendants of the Navarres inter-married with the

Mominee (or Momany) families, as with other families living in the Bay Shore area. Most of these descendants are buried in North Oregon Cemetery on Otter Creek Road.



Navarres and Kellers Playing Croquet, 1890s.

There are too many other descendants to be discussed in this book, but scanning the pages of city directories gives an idea of just the number of Navarres living in the boundaries of Toledo. The 1898 directory, for example, lists 39 Navarres, which of course does not include all the families out on the Bay Shore, or near Momineetown, or in the Monroe or Detroit areas. The 1933 directory lists 68 Navarres within the Toledo city limits. Below is a list of Navarre descendants from the 1916 directory:

Regular Service
Hand Work
Bell Collingwood 438
Home Phone 7694
Family Washings, 6c a Pound
Pure Soft Water

TOLEDO LAUNDRY AND TOILET SUPPLY CO.
ASHLAND AVENUE AND PRESCOTT STREET

THE SCHILLINGER BROS. CO.

215 CITY PARK AVE.
Home Phone 1361 Bell Phone Forest 363

1134

1916—TOLEDO CITY DIRECTORY CO.'S

REAL ESTATE

We can do it if it
can be done

Falardeau & Co.

314-316 Gardner Building
Both Phones 1300

Nauts Virginia B (wid J C), h724 Euclid av

Navarre Emily, mach opr, r229 Cherry Naval Recruiting Station, Hugh Mac

Nichol in charge, 630 St Clair

Navarotski Jno, lab, r310 Warsaw

"Josephine (wid Jos), h3140 Warsaw

Navarre Abraham, roofer, h59 City Park av

"Adam, carp, r524 Front

"Alex, driver, r516 Superior

"Amanda Mrs, bkpr Square Deal Co, r2332 Erie

"Andw, lab, h1712 Cutter

"Angeline (wid Lambert), h ns

Lucene av 2 e of Point Pl rd

"Arthur J, mach, h3139 Monroe

"Augusta Mrs, mgr Square Deal Clothing Co, h602 St Clair

"Clarence R, ironwkr, h130 Droege

"Clayton, driver, r38 14th

"C Henry, glasswkr, h2021 Michigan

"David, hlp, h518 Austin

"David, mach hd, r116 1st

"Dudley, lab, r1339 E Broadway

"Edw, clk, r318 Austin

"Eli, ironwkr, r130 Droege

"Elmer L, hlp, r1712 Cutter

"Ernest L, sal 602 St Clair, h dc

"Ethel V, sten Hull Umbrella Co, r39 City Park av

"Frank E, lab, h1403 Lagrange

"Frank J, cond, h1951 Gorrell

"Frank W, firemn, h341 Berry

"Gertrude E, bkpr, h1, 704 Huron

"Hattie (wid Peter), h132 Droege

"Henry C, foremn Tol Steel Tube Co, h2021 Michigan

"Hildreth, r736 Oak

NAVAREE HOTEL, Lawrence R

Algeo Mgr, St Clair ne cor Jackson, Tels: Home (Private Exchange) Main 7940, Bell Main 961

(See opp Classified Hotels)

General Contractors

Navarre Howard, riveter, r524 Front

"Jas, bartendr, r1339 E Broadway

"Jos, r186 Superior

NAVAREE J ALEXANDER, Forest

Products, Ties, Posts, Poles, Cross

Ties, Cross Arms, Pins, Eastern

Sales Mgr Valentine-Clark Co

1012-1014 Spitzer Bldg, Tels: Home

Main 7869, Bell Main 6236, h 223

Ashland av, Home Tel Main 708

"Julia (wid Albert), h1514 Michigan

"Lyndon D, clk Otto Westrup, i

Angeline Navarre

"Lynn, r736 Oak

"Margt (wid J P), h427 5th

"Margt M, sten Mass Mut Life Ins Co, r152 Droege

"Maria (wid R R), r524 Front

"Mary E (wid F X), r2120 Jefferson

"Maude, hotel 731 Summit, h do

"Melvin J, metalwkr, r152 Droege

"Nellie F, cashr F P Chapin, r708

Frederick

"Ode N, books 1718 Dor, h do

"Oliver B, h116 1st

"Park, ss Navarre av bet White ast

Tol Belt Ry

"Pearl, waiter, r524 Front

"Phoebe, mach opr, h229 Cherry

"Richd J, eng, h736 Oak

"Robt B, brkrmn, h548 Pleasant pl

"Rose (wid Isadore), r130 Droege

"Roy, welder, r948 Oak

"Russell B, lab, h1320 Noble

"Russell B jr, r1320 Noble

"School, ns Navarre av cor Viking

"Theatre, John M Harrington mgr, 766 Oak

"Thos, tmstr, r923 Erie

"Walter M, lab, r152 Droege

"Wm, mach hd, h1027 Oakdale av

"Wm, restr 524 Front, h do

"Navaugh Jno E, clk, r515 Palmwood

"Navelle Wm A, bartndr, r335 Broad

way

Navin, see also Nevin

"Jno, lab, h706 Balie

"Lenore, sten, r706 Balie

"May, sten, r706 Balie

"Thos D, clk, r703 Balie

Navis Morris, tailor, h828 Utica

Navore Webster, mach, r25 12th

Navrocki Jos, lab, h3154 Elm

Nawan Benj, bksmth, r109 Avondale

Nawicki Antonia (wid Jacob), h15

Dexter

Nawne Jno, lab, r rear 1332 Nebraska

Navrocki Benj, gro 1311 Buckingham

H. P. Main 114

449 Huron Street

Navarres in the 1916 Toledo City Directory.

Note that Eli, Peter's son, was living at 130 Droege (now Dover) and Oliver, another son, resided at 116 First Street in East Toledo.

Modern Descendants

Hundreds of Navarres currently live in the Toledo area, and many play prominent roles in the community. Dr. Robert Navarre, who died in January 1999, was a vascular surgeon for forty years in Toledo. Robert Breymaier, a direct descendant of Robert the scout, was a

Coast Guard veteran, worked at Dana Corporation, and was involved in many community organizations. His son Terry Breymaier, director at Eggleston-Meinert Funeral Home, is a Navarre historian, portrays Robert Navarre, and is president of the friends of Pearson Park. Among other modern descendants that the old scout would be proud of are the current Chief of Police of Toledo, Michael Navarre, and police detective Danny Navarre, both direct descendants of Peter.

All these family members who have played an important role in the history of Northwest Ohio are part of the proud legacy of Navarre.

Even though the legend of Peter Navarre has faded, his life and legacy remain. There can be no doubt of Navarre's important role in the history of Northwest Ohio, and his place today in the collective memory of the region seems secure.

An East Side school, road, and park all bear his name. There are also monuments at his grave in Mount Carmel Cemetery and at Navarre Park. And as a new century begins, appreciation for the old scout, based more on his actual accomplishments and his rugged pioneer courage, seems to be growing in the community he first walked in 1907.



Family, 1950s (left to right)

Navarre: the 1950s Family City Photograph

Note the 1950s family photo, the 1950s 1950s (left to right) and 1950s (left to right) and 1950s (left to right) in the 1950s.

Modern Descendants

Modern descendants of the Navarre family are the Navarre family, and many of the modern descendants are the Navarre family. The Navarre family, who lived in the 1950s, was a family of the 1950s. The Navarre family, who lived in the 1950s, was a family of the 1950s. The Navarre family, who lived in the 1950s, was a family of the 1950s.

Chapter Seven:

The Legacy

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“A Community Remembers”

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Even though the legend of Peter Navarre has faded, much of the solid legacy remains. There can be no doubt of Navarre's important role in the history of Northwest Ohio, and his place today in the collective memory of the region seems secure.

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The Avenue

As early as 1875, Navarre's name appears in the old plat map of East Toledo on the avenue that still bears his name eastward from the river. Since the map was issued the year after Peter's death, it is very possible Navarre Avenue was named for him even before he died. The road does not lead to the Navarre Tract in Oregon Township, but is said to follow the trail Peter would take through the woods whenever he traveled east (Pearson, *Toledo Blade* article, 1905). Navarre Avenue remains one of the most traveled roads in East Toledo, and is also the main business thoroughfare through Oregon.



**Navarre Avenue, Early 1900s, Looking to Wheeling St.
The Railroad Overpass Still Exists.**

The School

One of the earliest schools in East Toledo also perpetuates the name of Navarre. A *Toledo Blade* article of 1929 dates the first Navarre School to 1877, but city directories and board of education records place its construction closer to 1890. The first school was located on the triangle formed by Navarre Avenue, Oak Street, and Viking (then called Short Street).

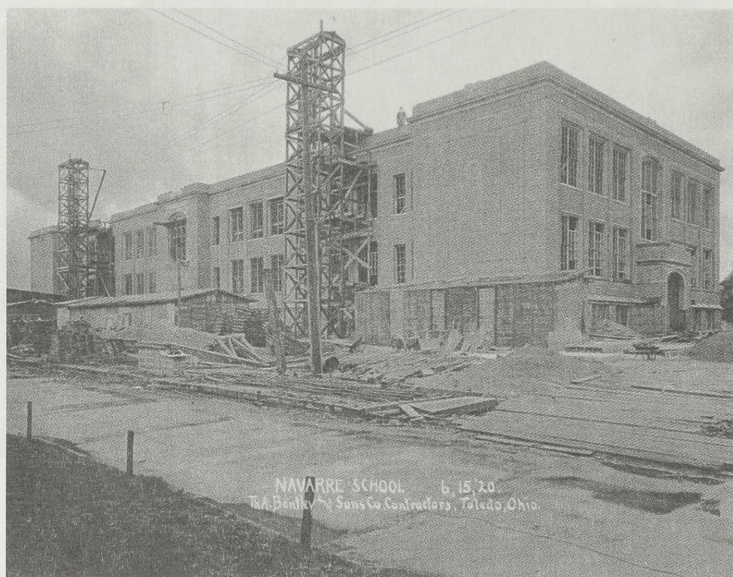


Old Navarre School, Late 1800s to 1920.

Whether it was named directly for the scout or for the street on which it was built is unclear, but most likely its name honors Peter Navarre himself. It is one of only two East Side elementary schools named for prominent

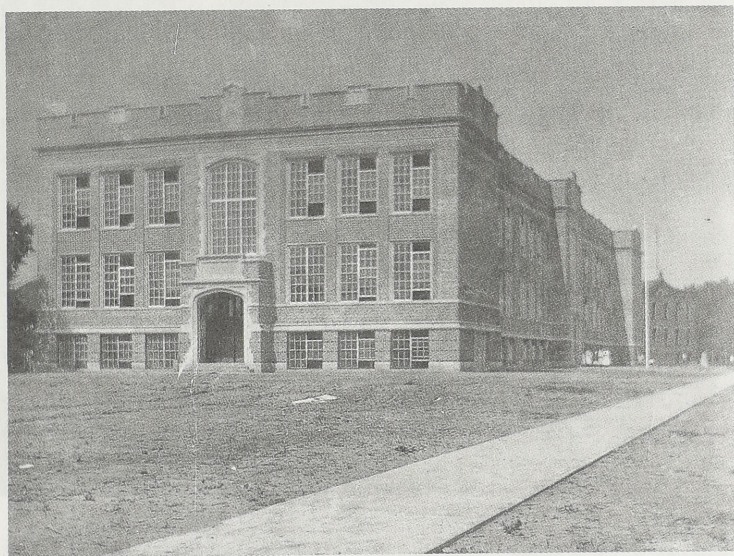
local figures (the other being Raymer). It was a brick structure of Gothic design, with bold Italianate window hoods and roofline, and its principal was Highland S. Hutchins. New additions were added over the years to accommodate the increasing enrollment. A Toledo public school report of 1894 speaks of a new structure "with water introduced into the building" at the old school. That year it had 253 students.

Overcrowding at the school led to the demand for a new building by the second decade of the 20th century. In 1920, Bentley & Sons constructed a large modern brick school at a cost of \$272,500.00 and with a capacity for up to 1,000 students. Pictures were taken each month to show the progress being made on the construction of the school.



Navarre School Nearing Completion, June 15, 1920.

The new school was built on the corner of Kingston and Navarre Avenue, just across the street from the old school, which was soon torn down. Emmet R. Kirkendall returned to serve as principal of this new school, a position he held until his retirement in 1947. The school celebrated its 75th Anniversary on October 15, 1995, and many alumni and guests were invited back for the festivities. At that time historical artifacts, class pictures, and rare early photographs were again brought to light. Enrollment by 1995 had reached 520 students taught by 32 teachers.



Rare View of Navarre School with Old School in the Background, 1920.

The Park

Navarre Park, named for the scout and one of the oldest parks in Toledo, was developed during the early 1890s on land formerly owned by Oliver Stevens, who also farmed the land now occupied by the Sun Oil Refinery and where he built an octagon house in 1855. The city acquired the 53 acres of land in 1893 (Killits, p. 597). It was here among the ravines and swales that Navarre was said to have met with the Indians.



Early View of Ravines in Navarre Park, about 1900.

By 1895 a large pavilion was built in the park, which was the scene of many picnics and family gatherings until it was replaced by the current shelter house during the W.P.A. building programs of the late

1930s. With its recent additions, the shelter house now serves as the East Toledo Senior Center. The park also has a community swimming pool, which replaced an earlier pool along Woodville Road, tennis courts, recreation areas, soccer and softball fields, walking paths, and the East Toledo Family Center.

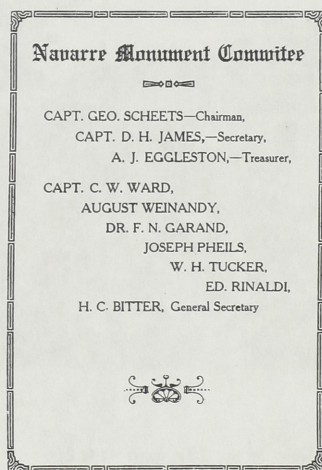


The Newly-Constructed Shelter House, 1940.

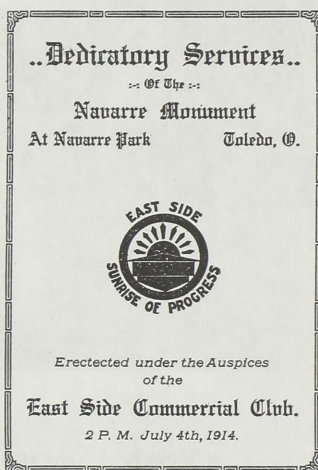
The Navarre Monument

Some accounts of Navarre Park speak of a statue of Peter Navarre in pioneer clothing near one of the entrances, but no photographs or other records substantiate the existence of such a memorial. As early as 1905, George Pearson wrote that Peter Navarre's "life was largely spent among the Indians, and the ravine at Navarre park, where it is proposed to erect a monument, was a

favorite camping ground of the Indians, and there the scout frequently met them" (*Toledo Blade*, 1905). Another *Blade* article from July 7, 1906, reports that at a Ford Post meeting "preliminary steps were taken toward the erection of a monument to Peter Navarre, the great American scout." This monument, which still stands at the corner of Navarre Avenue and White Street, was dedicated on Saturday, July 4th, 1914.



Gutter-Palmer 218 East Street



Navarre Monument Dedictory Services, July 4, 1914.

The monument was dedicated to both Peter and Robert Navarre for their services during the war. Captain George Scheets, former mayor of Toledo and secretary of the Ford Post, was chairman of the event (see pages 12-14). William H. Tucker, president of the East Side

Commercial Club and of the monument committee, acted as master of ceremonies. A *Toledo Blade* article describes the occasion: "In the presence of 5,000 patriotic citizens, the monument to Peter and Robert Navarre was unveiled at Navarre Park Saturday by Mrs. Celina Navarre-Griffith, a grand-daughter of Peter Navarre. As the beautiful granite shaft emerged from beneath the canvas covering the prophecy of the Toledo poet, the late Michael Murphy, was fulfilled and two heroes of the war of 1812 had been signally honored and given the 'hero's reward'" (*Toledo Blade*, July 6, 1914). Philip Loop of the Ford Post raised the stars and stripes.

PROGRAMME	
No. 1.	Salute of thirteen guns by Battery B
No. 2.	Selection by U. B. Band,
No. 3.	"America" by male chorus lead by Trombone, audience joining.
No. 4.	Opening remarks by Hon. W. H. Tucker,
No. 5.	Unveiling of monument by Mrs. Celina Navarre Griffin grand-daughter of Peter Navarre,
No. 6.	Dedication and presentation of monument to Park Board by Capt. Geo. Scheets and acceptance of same by Hon. Wm. Beatty President of Park Board,
No. 7.	Address by Mayor Carl H. Keller,

PROGRAMME	
No. 8.	Address by Gen. Isaac R. Sherwood
No. 9.	Selection by U. B. Band,
No. 10.	Address by Dr. Charles E. Slocum,
No. 11.	Reading of Michael P. Murphy's poem on Peter Navarre by Mrs. W. F. Barrett,
No. 12.	"The Star Spangled Banner" by male chorus accompanied by Trombone,
No. 13.	History of Navarre monument by Capt. D. H. James, Secy, Navarre Monument Committee,
No. 14.	Address by Gen. J. Kent Hamilton,
No. 15.	Selection by U. B. Band.

The 'Programme' from the Dedication Service.

Among the remarks that day were the following by Mr. Tucker: "Their services rendered to our country assisted materially in saving the great Northwest Territory to the United States. The final resting places of these men

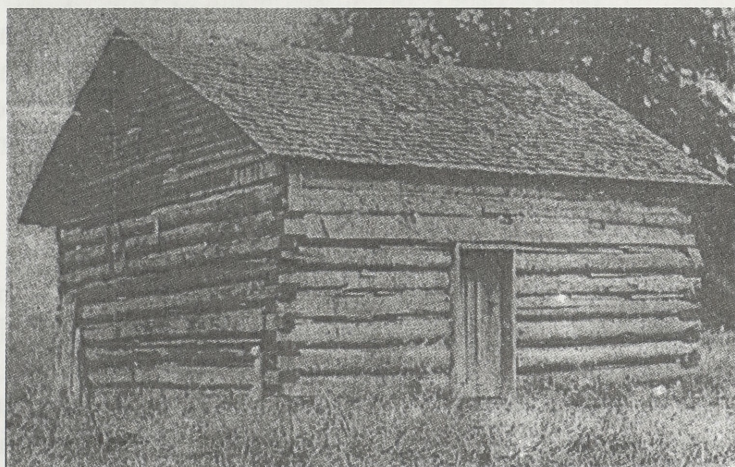
are unknown, and they sleep in unmarked graves, yet their works follow them and will be a constant inspiration to us and to unborn generations.” A few years later, Peter’s grave would be designated at Mount Carmel Cemetery, but Robert’s has not been found. Interestingly, Tucker continues: “This monument is the first erected in this city to the honor of any of our citizens; may it not be the last one. The world loves a patriot; let us cherish our own” (*Toledo Blade*, July 6, 1914). Tucker may have been right about no monuments being erected to a citizen, but certainly statues such as the one to Civil War General James Steedman had already been placed around the city.



Among the Navarre relatives at the dedication of the monument were Peter's three surviving sons (Oliver, Eli, and Lambert) and his two daughters (Susan, and Zoa). Robert R., the last son of Robert the scout, died just a few months earlier at the East Side home of his son, William.

The Cabin

Navarre Park also played a key role in advancing the legacy of the pioneer by housing a famous cabin on its land. In 1922 the *Toledo News-Bee* discovered a cabin in a wheat field near Momineetown out Consaul Street, and incorrectly believed it to belong to Peter Navarre. Evidence has suggested that it was instead Peter Navarre, Jr., who built the cabin near the end of his father's life. This is the cabin that was brought to Navarre Park and dedicated on September 9, 1922.



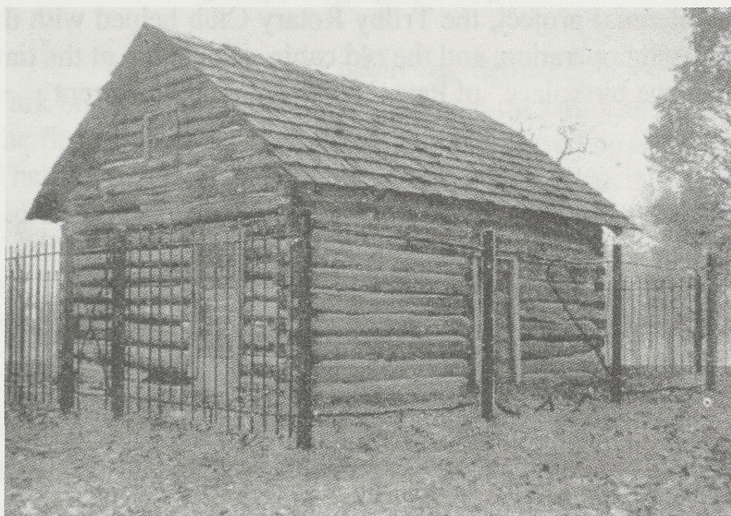
Navarre Cabin on Enos Mominee Farm before 1922.

Patrick Tucker calls into question the date the cabin was constructed. In a letter to Randolph Downes on July 3, 1956, George Mathieu states that Edward Beauregard told him the cabin was built after Peter Navarre's death. Paul J. Hoeflinger also wrote to Dr. Downes on July 9, 1956, that his mother, Flora Mominee used to play at the cabin on the Enos Mominee farm and she did not remember seeing Peter Navarre (Tucker, p. 9). Irene McCreery, of the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library wrote on December 15, 1955, that the cabin was built between 1863 and 1867 (Tucker, p. 10). Interviews with Oliver and Eli Navarre in 1922 were inconclusive. Yet, why else would Enos Mominee give land on his farm for a cabin if not to help out his old friend the scout? All that can be said for sure, was that the cabin was built by Peter Navarre, Jr., out on the Mominee farm sometime in the 1860s or 70s, and it was brought to Navarre Park in 1922.

Toledo Mayor Bernard Brough spoke at the dedication ceremony in the park, and Reverend Patrick O'Brien, former pastor of Good Shepherd Church, gave the invocation. "The event was the occasion of the meeting of pioneer residents, civil war veterans and descendants of the families of Peter and Robert Navarre. Eli Navarre, 90, son of Peter Navarre, was present" (*Toledo Blade*, September 11, 1922).

For thirty-five years, the old cabin stood on a slight rise in the park near Navarre Avenue just west of the present-day tennis courts. Over time, the cabin gradually became more and more dilapidated. Initials were carved into the logs. Children were even found getting into the cabin and starting fires. In 1934, an iron fence was built around the cabin, but it continued to deteriorate. A *Blade* article by Kenneth Rieger in 1955 describes the condition

of the cabin at that time: "Today it stands as a monument to neglect. Many shingles are missing from the roof. A large, dead tree limb has fallen across the roof. There are no coverings of windows and doors. They wouldn't do much good anyway because of gaps between the logs almost large enough to crawl through. Inside the cabin the floor is covered with debris, leaves, an old mattress and other junk" (*Toledo Blade*, November 28, 1955). Although Rieger misidentifies the cabin as being built in 1807, he does describe its condition accurately. Soon it would be moved to the Toledo Zoo, and only its concrete floor from 1922 can still be seen at Navarre Park.



View of Navarre Cabin with Fence around it, 1930s.

Through the efforts of the Peter Navarre Memorial Association, the Anthony Wayne Parkway Board and The Blade funds were subscribed from citizens of Toledo to move and restore the Navarre cabin at the Zoo. By June of 1957, workers were busy repairing and rebuilding the cabin on its new site just outside the Zoo amphitheater. It

was opened to the public in May 1958. An article from November of that same year proclaims that a “total of 247,800 persons have visited historic Peter Navarre cabin in the Toledo Zoological Park in 1958” (*Toledo Blade*, November 19, 1958). Although the number of visitors was amazing, the article continues, they contributed only \$15.67 toward its maintenance. Soon the cabin would no longer be open to the public.

In 1975, Vernon Wiersma, whose firm was doing landscape architecture for an “1837 park,” approached zoo director Philip Skeldon about moving the cabin to Crosby Gardens (now Toledo Botanical Gardens). As their bi-centennial project, the Trilby Rotary Club helped with the moving operation, and the old cabin, referred to at the time as “the birthplace” of Peter Navarre, found its current



Cabin at Toledo Botanical Gardens, Heavily Guarded.

home (*Toledo Blade*, September 3, 1975). A rail fence was constructed around the cabin and landscaping, appropriate to the period, was added. Inside, kettles, furs and skins, along with other pioneer necessities adorned the walls. Sadly, however, in spite of the historical plaques on the cabin, it is referred to in its new setting only as a "pioneer homestead" misdated to 1837. It appears that the Navarre cabin has traveled and crossed the river almost as much as Navarre himself. Many East Siders would like to see the cabin come back to East Toledo.

Peter Navarre Day

When the Navarre cabin was dedicated at Navarre Park on September 9, 1922, it provided the opportunity for the first-ever Peter Navarre Day to be declared by the city. That day was chosen to commemorate the date Navarre led the soldiers from General Harrison to Perry in time to fight the Battle of Lake Erie the next day. Following the dedication of the cabin, city council voted unanimously to make Peter Navarre Day an annual civic holiday.

The next year, on Saturday, October 6, 1923, Peter Navarre Day was celebrated with the dedication of the large marker at Mount Carmel Cemetery (see pp. 14-15). But for the next 65 years there would be no more official celebrations. Then in 1989, the East Toledo Historical Society decided to replace the bronze marker which had been stolen from the monument and to celebrate Peter Navarre Day once again.

Therefore, on September 9th festivities were held in the park, and the dedication ceremony was attended by Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, Mayor Donna Owens, Councilman Gene Cook, and many East Side families.

Featured that day was a French voyager campsite by Tim Kreps, displays of Navarre family items, and contests for children.



PLAN TO ATTEND

PETER NAVARRE DAY

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

NAVARRE PARK

Navarre Avenue at White Street

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

12 NOON - 3 PM

(Rain Date September 10 2 pm)

featuring a REDEDICATION CEREMONY

at the NAVARRE MONUMENT
12 noon

and
DEDICATION OF
NEW TENNIS COURTS

Free Tennis Clinics

12:30 - 1:30

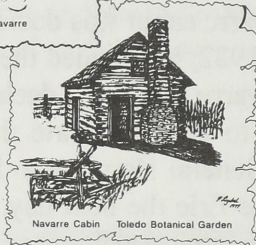
all equipment provided
no advanced registration

AUTHENTIC VOYAGER CAMPSITE

HISTORICAL DISPLAYS

CONTESTS

WITH PRIZES FOR CHILDREN



SPONSORED BY



YOUR 3 1/4% TAX IS AT WORK

Peter Navarre Day, 1989.

Beginning in 1996, the teachers and staff at Navarre School, along with members of the East Toledo Historical Society, have sponsored a Peter Navarre Day each September, either at the school or the park. This event has helped make students more aware of the history of their school and of their community. They learn about the hardships faced by the pioneer settlers of East Toledo, hear music from that period, and learn of pioneer crafts.



Terry Breymaier, Navarre Descendant, with Students.

Because of Peter Navarre's importance, Navarre Park has become the home of the East Toledo Historical Society. In addition to the remembrance of Peter Navarre Day, the Historical Society meets in the shelter house, and has developed a museum in the park. Through the efforts of Bob Yenrick and the generosity of the East Toledo Family Center, an old concession stand that dates back to the 1920s has been remodeled to become the home of the Historical Society's museum. In the museum, old Waite High School yearbooks, early city directories, East Side Sun archives, and many other research possibilities await the student of East Toledo history.

Also, between the shelter house and the museum, a memorial brick walkway has been developed. Dozens of Toledo families have commemorated loved ones at the walkway, where new bricks are dedicated every year on Peter Navarre Day. Students at Navarre School have

donated pennies and nickels to purchase bricks in honor of their school and former teachers.



East Toledo Historical Society Museum.

Peter Navarre Day is only one way to celebrate the history of the community and build pride in the heritage of East Toledo. Remembering the past is a way of affirming the present and building toward the future. The Navarre name gives a focal point for preserving East Side history. Carrying the history of the community into current and future generations is perhaps the greatest legacy of Peter Navarre's fame.



Students at the Navarre Monument, 1999.



Photograph of Peter Navarre, 1868.

Conclusion:

Historical Importance

While research on the life of Peter Navarre may raise more questions than answers, his legacy is undoubtedly secure and continues to this day to permeate East Side history.

Many facts about his life are known. It can safely be said that he was indeed descended from royalty, that he was born probably in 1790, spent the majority of his youth in the Frenchtown settlement at the River Raisin, moved with his family to the Maumee Valley in 1806 or 1807, worked in the fur trade with the Indians, was at the Raisin River massacre, served as a scout for General Harrison, carried many messages and led soldiers to Commodore Perry, and was present at the Battle of the Thames.

Much is also known about his family and later life. He continued to live within a few miles of the Presque Isle area along the Bay Shore for the remainder of his life. He achieved some degree of local fame during his lifetime. He received a government pension in 1864, was an early president of the Pioneer Association, and attended reunions of the War of 1812 veterans. He died on March 20th, 1874, and is buried in Mount Carmel Cemetery.

While there is no doubt that Navarre's legend did exaggerate his accomplishments, perhaps most glaringly in his claim to have killed Tecumseh, there is also no doubt of his historical importance. The mission through the

thunderstorm to warn of the attack at Fort Stephenson may have been confused by later writers with Navarre's actual messages carried to Upper Sandusky and Urbana. The fact that Navarre probably exaggerated his age seems relatively harmless, especially in light of the poor record keeping of that time. Also, that Navarre could not write and that his first language was French perhaps also contributed to discrepancies in the earlier accounts of his life. The over-exuberant growth of his legend in the first half of the 20th century can be attributed simply to uncritical hero worship.

But Navarre's accomplishments remain. At the most crucial time in Northwest Ohio history, Navarre was probably its most important native citizen. Who else in the history of this region can claim a greater degree of national fame? While actors like Danny Thomas and Jamie Farr are celebrated as famous Toledoans, Peter Navarre certainly had a far greater impact on our history.

One can only imagine the thoughts his mind entertained about the swamp-infested land when he arrived east of the Maumee River. Presently we drive over the same paths taken by Peter and think little of the hardships he and his family had to endure just in order to survive. His perseverance and determination to forge a living from the land was the embodiment of the pioneer spirit. His knowledge of the terrain proved more than once to be decisive for the American cause during the War of 1812, and his elusiveness from the enemy demonstrated his resourcefulness and creativity. His was an independent spirit that produced strong family roots and lineage for Toledo.

We remember Peter Navarre not because of one single event or accomplishment, but because he was among the first and was the most important person to

establish the heritage we value today. Although it may be impossible to completely separate fact from fiction, truth from exaggeration, a thorough study of the life of Peter Navarre reveals a legacy of courage, pioneer spirit, skill and endurance, service to country, and historical significance. That is the legacy of the man behind the legend.

* * *

Appendix A:

The Poem

The following poem was written in honor of Peter Navarre by Michael P. Murphy and was recited by Mrs. W. F. Barrett at the dedication of the monument to Peter and his brother Robert in Navarre Park on July 4, 1914.

"Some day when the Truth has reclaimed from the tomb
This tale, which a century has shrouded in gloom,
The tongue of a master shall tell it, and then
Men will listen and clamor to hear it again.
And when it is told in the ages to come
Men's eyes will be moist and men's lips will be dumb,
And patriot pilgrims will come from afar
To kneel at the grave of Peter Navarre.
The frontier blazed and the borderland bled
With the tomahawk's stroke, and the midnight was red
With the fierce flames which followed the red raider's
brand
For the fiends of Tecumseh were abroad in the land.
It was then, in the moment of danger and dread
The Avenger strode forth, with a price on his head,
And the legends still tell, how all through that war
Death rode in the saddle with Peter Navarre.
Where the Maumee's green banks broaden out fair and
wide
To the lake, stands Fort Meigs. On the opposite side
And a mile farther down is Miami, the spot
Where as glorious a battle as ever was fought

Was waged against odds of a hundred to one,
In that fight for our flag—and our flag might be lacking a
star

Were it not for that battle—and Peter Navarre.
What boots it to tell of a struggle which gave
To freedom a home and to Thralldom a grave?
The annals of war in no age and no clime
Have ever revealed so barbaric a crime
As Proctor committed at Frenchtown. Glencoe
Was rivaled and shamed that black day at Monroe.
The news traveled fast and the news traveled far
And the herald that bore it was Peter Navarre.
Who was it who swam the broad river and crept
Through the brush to Ft. Stephenson, nor waited nor slept,
While, camped at Fort Meigs, Harrison parleyed with fate,
And hoped for the help that might reach him too late.
Who was it, entrapped, fought his way to the fort,
And fought his way back with a cheering report
That assistance was coming? The fates have no bar
For men of such mettle as Peter Navarre.
The valley is stricken with terror, and where
Oh, where is Navarre? There is death in the air.
For Proctor is marching from Malden the while
Tecumseh is massing his braves at Presque Isle,
The men in the forts ply the pick and the spade;
The women and children within the stockade,
Like the mariners who trust in their compass and star,
Place their hopes in high Heaven and—Peter Navarre.
The battle has waged these six hours. At last
The enemy's gaining, the outposts are passed.
God help them, they fight with a frenzied despair;
They fight for their homes and their helpless ones there.
Surrender? No, never. There's too much to be lost.
Were it only their lives, they'd have laughed at the cost,
When, lo, as hopes flee in affright, from afar
Comes the thrice-blessed war cry of Peter Navarre.

With a fierce cry of vengeance and "Remember Monroe,"
Six hundred Kentuckians flash death on the foe.
Oh, sweet are the kisses which true love bestows,
And dear are the blessings the home circle knows,
But sweeter and dearer and better than all
Is the joy which Revenge seeks and finds in the fall
Of a traitor and tyrant. Death's gates stood ajar
For the harvest that day reaped by Peter Navarre.
Defrauded by Fate and neglected by Fame
No stone tells the story, no slab bears the name
Of the hero whose life was an epic sublime,
But a people will know in the fullness of time,
When the love of a Nation and the voice of a bard
Shall give to a hero a hero's reward.
The stain shall not tarnish nor blemish shall mar
The glory which halos the name of Navarre."

Michael P. Murphy

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About the Authors

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Larry Michaels was born and raised in East Toledo, attended Navarre School, and walked down Navarre Avenue countless times to play tennis at Navarre Park. He has written other books about East Side history, including *East Side Story* and *Treasures of East Toledo*.

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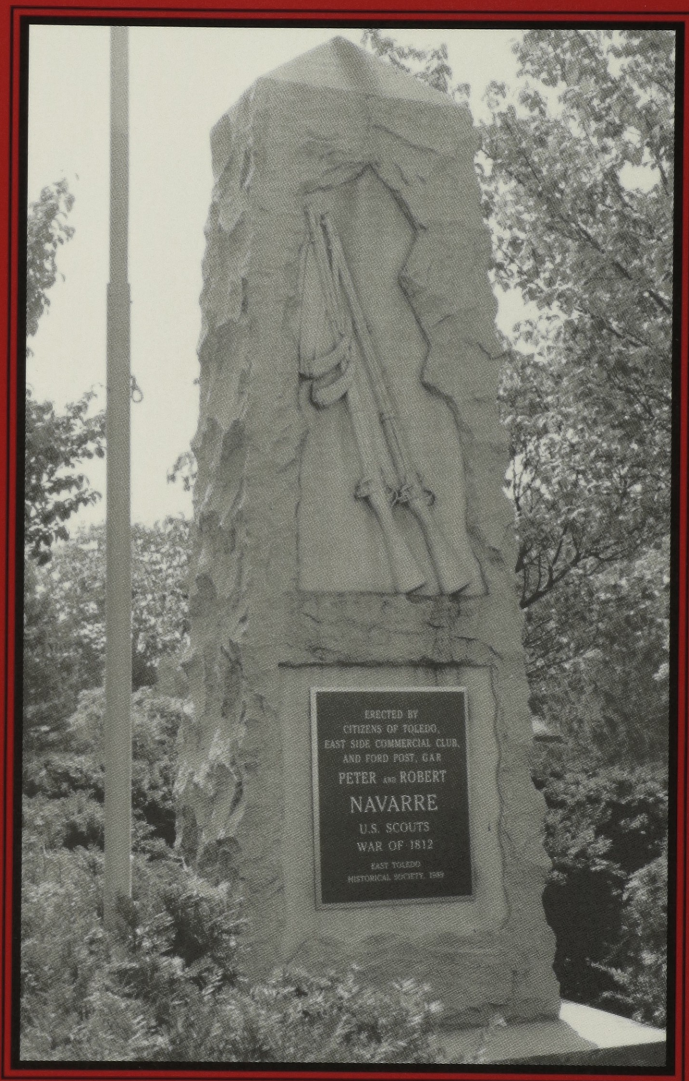
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